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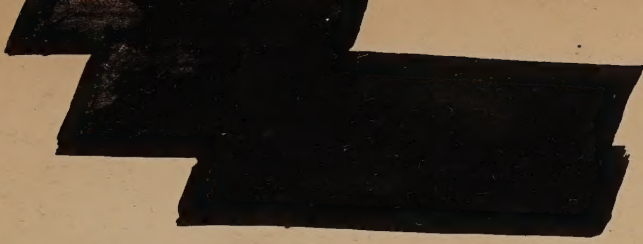
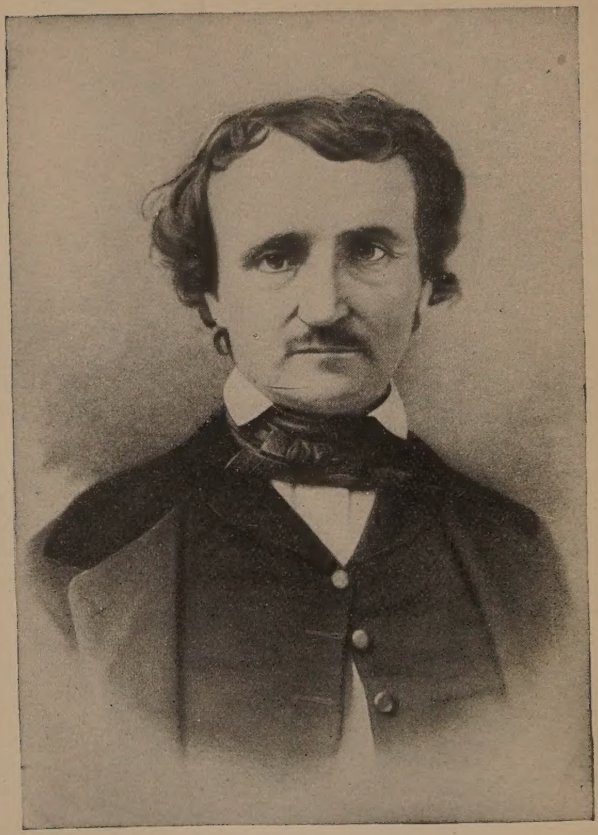
SELECTIONS FROM AMERICAN POETRY





EDGAR ALLAN POE
From an old daguerreotype

Merrill's English Texts

SELECTIONS

FROM

AMERICAN POETRY

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NEW YORK

CHARLES E. MERRILL COMPANY

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PART ONE

POE, LONGFELLOW, WHITTIER

INTRODUCTION

LIFE OF POE, 1809–1849

THE Edgar Allan Poe School of English is one of the six departments of the University of Virginia. Though Poe disgraced the University while he was in attendance, his subsequent literary works have brought him such fame that he is now known as Virginia's most distinguished student. This change in the attitude of his alma mater toward him is similar to the change in the attitude of the world toward so erratic a genius. Poe has been reviled as an atheist, a sot, and a wife-deserter; he has been condemned as a writer possessed of no great message that is worthy of long remembrance, but skilled only in a limited, morbid field of mechanically excellent verse and of ingenious but shallow prose. On the other hand, he has been latterly praised as a good man, to be pitied for his high-strung temperament and his one failing of fondness for drink, and as the greatest American writer in both poetry and prose. The reason for these widely varying estimates is that Poe lived romantically and abnormally from the beginning to the end of his forty variegated years. The proper estimate of his life as a man and his worth as a writer no doubt lies between the two extremes. It is certain that he drank to excess, but it is equally certain that he supported his wife faithfully to the best of his ability. Nearly all the critics now assign to him high rank as the possessor of a brilliant intellect, as the creator of the detective story type, and as the author of a wonderfully fascinating, mysterious poem, "The

Raven." If we depart somewhat from the grouping of even the best biographer of Poe, *i.e.*, George E. Woodberry, we may get the clearest idea of Poe's life by tracing it in two periods. The first period, from 1809 to 1831, started him in literature as a profession. The second period, from 1831 to 1849, was devoted entirely to writing and editorial work. It was during his second period that he composed "The Raven."

His mother, an actress, was, at the time of his birth, January 19, 1809, filling an engagement in Boston. His father, David Poe, a native of Baltimore, had ceased the practice of law and become a mediocre actor. At the age of two, Poe, left an orphan, was adopted by John Allan, a wealthy tobacco merchant of Richmond, Virginia. Though not able to understand the moods and peculiarities of his adopted son, Mr. Allan gave Poe opportunities for a good education. From the age of six to eleven he was in Europe, two years being spent in school at a London suburb, Stoke Newington. His story "William Wilson" relates his Stoke Newington memories. Then he lived for six years in luxury in the large red brick house which was the home of his foster parents in Richmond. Among the boys of his own age, he was a clever boxer, a strong swimmer, a swift runner, and a good jumper, a broad jump of twenty-one feet, six inches, with a running start of twenty yards, being his best record; but his aristocratic Richmond companions made the proud boy feel an outcast by reminding him that his parents had been strolling players.

In 1826 he entered the University of Virginia, at Charlottesville. Here he roomed first on the lawn with a Richmond boy, but, having a fist fight with him, ending in friendship but separation as room-mates, Poe moved to No. 13, West Range. He used to take long solitary walks in the mountains, but was also a leader in hilarious drinking and card-playing, which involved him in such

debt that Allan removed him from the University at the end of a year and put him to work in his counting-room. Chafing under the restraint of a steady life, he ran away to Boston, where in 1827 he obtained a publisher for an anonymous volume of verse, *Tamerlane and Other Poems,* and two years later another volume, containing his name on the title page, *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems,* was published in Baltimore. Meanwhile he served in the army creditably for two years, after which his foster parent obtained for him a West Point cadetship. He entered the Academy in July, 1830, but, disliking the discipline, he deliberately set out to get himself discharged, which he easily accomplished; he was court-martialed and dismissed in March, 1831. Without hope of any further aid from the rich Mr. Allan, he was now left to make his own way by literature.

From 1831 to his death in 1849, Poe was a hack writer, who fortunately turned out some great literature. During these eighteen years he was employed on numerous papers and magazines as editor and contributor. Whenever he obtained a regular editorial position, Poe chafed under the restraint, just as he had done in his youth in business and in West Point; yet, driven by necessity, he worked conscientiously to hold his positions. He obtained his first editorship, that of the *Southern Literary Messenger,* published in Richmond, through the reputation that came to him from his one hundred dollar prize story, "A Ms. Found in a Bottle," printed in a Baltimore paper. In 1836 he was married to Virginia Clemm, a fourteen-year-old Baltimore cousin of his. Leaving Richmond, he was for five years employed in editorial work in Philadelphia on *The Gentleman's Magazine* and on *Graham's Magazine.* Then in 1842 he moved to New York, working there for *The Evening Mirror* and *The Broadway Journal.*

While he was employed editorially on the magazines and newspapers named, he contributed to these and other

papers many critical essays, short stories, and short poems. Among his short stories of mystery and analytical power are "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Masque of the Red Death," "Marie Roget," "Ligeia," "The Black Cat," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "The Gold Bug," one of the best short stories in the English language. In his stories he shows no particular power in character-drawing, but in supernatural weirdness and horror he is unsurpassed. His critical articles on the literary men of New York and on the poets and poetry of America aroused much bitter feeling, as in the case of his strictures on the poet Rufus W. Griswold, who had been his friend, but who was so irritated by Poe's criticisms that in his biography of Poe he seems to have set out to get even by making untrue or exaggerated statements. In one of his critical works, Poe attacked Longfellow as a plagiarist, and condemned the didactic tone of his earlier poetry, though he acknowledged that Longfellow's poetry possessed some excellent traits. Yet Poe was the first well-known critic to point out the genius of the shy young novelist Hawthorne. A very ingenious general critical study by Poe is the one entitled, "The Philosophy of Composition," which purports to explain the method used in the writing of "The Raven." Among Poe's poems are "To Helen, "To One in Paradise," "Annabel Lee," "Ulalume," "To My Mother," "The Haunted Palace," "The City in the Sea," "Lenore," "Dreamland," "Israfel," "The Conqueror Worm," "The Bells," and "The Raven."

In "The Raven," his most popular poem, there are hints of the style of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Yet Poe's own style is distinct and individual. He had a natural perception of beauty, a finely rhythmical sense. His technical mastery of verse was wonderful. He took the greatest pains to perfect the form of his poetry. He was always conscientious and sincere, but was limited in his

range. He does not treat of the universal themes which are at the basis of the great works of such poets as Milton and Wordsworth. The theme of "The Raven," for instance, is merely the resistless disaster of a man's destiny. The poem is extraordinarily vivid, yet it leaves such indistinct pictures in the mind that artists have the greatest difficulty in illustrating it. It has such a metrical charm that, like "The Bells," it is a favorite of elocutionists.

"The Raven" was originally published in the New York *Evening Mirror,* January 29, 1845, copied from advance sheets of *The American Whig Review* for February, 1845. It appeared also in the New York *Broadway Journal,* February 8, 1845, and, revised, in the edition of Poe's poems published in 1845 by Wiley and Putnam, 161 Broadway, New York. In the copy of the 1845 edition, called the Lorimer Graham copy, Poe made marginal corrections which are recorded by Woodberry and Stedman in their edition.

There are conflicting stories concerning the time and the circumstances of the composition of the poem. In 1842, Poe, then at Saratoga Springs, is said to have mentioned the poem to a lady who had been a contributor to the *Evening Mirror.* Next summer he showed her a draft of the poem. Another story is that he offered the poem in the office of George R. Graham and received fifteen dollars for it to aid his starving wife. Still another story is that he composed the poem after ten o'clock one evening in order to secure medicine for his sick wife. Again, it is said that he composed the poem one day and then declaimed it as was his custom in the hearing of boon companions in a New York tavern when he was drunk. One more story is that he composed the poem stanza by stanza, accepting the criticisms made by his friends. W. F. Gill, in his biography, says that Poe wrote the poem in the winter of 1844 in a plain, old-fashioned frame house

near the corner of Eighty-fourth Street and the Boulevard Avenue, where he and his wife and his wife's mother were then boarding.

All these stories of the time and the circumstances of the writing of "The Raven" give a lively idea of the struggling years of the poor journalist in New York. He had hard work to earn enough to support his family. Occasionally he broke the bounds of sobriety and made it still harder to gain sustenance. Some of those who worked in the editorial offices with him report that he was uniformly courteous and for long periods steady. He lived from 1844 to 1849 in Kingsbridge Road, Fordham, New York, in a cottage preserved now as a Poe museum. In 1847 his wife died. Two years later in the city of Baltimore he was found insensible in the street, was taken to a hospital, and there died on October 7, 1849.

So much seems clear regarding the life of an author whose actions have been the subject of endless controversy. In conclusion it is sufficient to say that the centenary of his birth was marked by enthusiastic gatherings in the various large cities of the United States to do honor to his genius as one of the foremost of American writers.

LIFE OF LONGFELLOW, 1807–1882

In the same way in which many Englishmen get their history from Shakespeare's plays, many Americans learn theirs from Longfellow's poems. Americans' ideas of New England colonial life are, for example, largely obtained from Longfellow's *Courtship of Miles Standish*, rather than from the authentic old chronicles or the modern histories. As Shakespeare used the facts to suit himself, so did Longfellow. Longfellow has been as much admired and praised in the United States as Shakespeare in England. Longfellow has for two generations been the most popular American poet. His poetry has been thus

extraordinarily popular because it appeals most to simple tastes that demand concreteness and sympathy in the literature which they praise; and yet it appeals also to the heart of the most cultured scholars. His life was so simple and his character was so amiable that every one who knew anything about him — and every one knew something about him — loved him as if he were a personal friend. The simple, tranquil life of this representative of the best American ideals of his age, as related in the authoritative biography, that by Samuel Longfellow published in 1891 in three volumes, is interesting in spite of its normal, not to say commonplace, happiness. For almost fifty years (from 1807 to 1854), Longfellow lived a scholar's life, and then for nearly thirty years (from 1854 to 1882), he lived as a poet and man of letters. His *Courtship of Miles Standish* was written and published during this second period of his life.

In many schools, the twenty-seventh of February is known as Longfellow day, for that was the birthday of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow in 1807 at Portland, Maine. He was the son of a lawyer who could trace his ancestry back for more than a hundred and fifty years to an Edward Longfellow, of Horsforth, England, through a line of sturdy and mostly prosperous colonists — blacksmiths, schoolmasters, judges. His mother's father was General Peleg Wadsworth, a Revolutionary soldier of distinction; his mother was a descendant of Priscilla Alden. Longfellow was named after Henry, one of the brothers of his mother, and was given also the family name, Wadsworth. At General Wadsworth's home, which was the first brick house built in Portland, and which is still standing (admission twenty-five cents), Henry Wadsworth Longfellow spent his boyhood. His delight in the childhood life in Portland is evident in his poem, "My Lost Youth." He had plenty of books to read in his father's library — the poems of Milton, Pope, Dryden, Cowper, Moore; *Don*

Quixote and the successive numbers of Irving's *Sketch-Book*, which began to appear in 1819. He did not read, like Poe, the poems of Shelley, Keats, and Byron, the passionate romanticists of the early nineteenth century. At the private schools which he attended he is spoken of as a handsome schoolboy, thoughtful but not melancholy; not averse to the quieter sports, but more fond of a book under the trees. His home life was idyllic in its charm. At the age of thirteen the boy was made happy by seeing his first poem printed anonymously in the Portland *Gazette*.

When he was fifteen he entered Bowdoin College, at Brunswick, Maine. Probably the reason why he did not go to his father's college, Harvard, was that his father was a trustee of Bowdoin, which had been opened in 1802. At Bowdoin he knew Hawthorne and Franklin Pierce. His college life simply continued the training he had received at home and in the private schools. He studied faithfully the mathematics, natural sciences, and philosophy of the course. From his study of the classics and his reading in the college library he acquired a perspicuous but balanced English prose style. While at Bowdoin he wrote verses for the newspapers; fourteen of these were published the year after his graduation in a volume entitled *Miscellaneous Poems selected from the United States Literary Gazette*. Of these the best known is "Hymn of the Moravian Nuns." He finished his course at the age of eighteen, and was asked to go abroad to prepare himself for a Bowdoin professorship of modern languages. His father allowed him six hundred dollars a year for a three years' stay in Europe.

Thirsting for the springs of old culture, reverently alert for impressions of European life, the young American scholar took passage for Havre. His youthful enjoyment of all that he saw and felt is evident on every page of the notes which he published several years after his return.

The extent of his travels is indicated by a sentence from the early part of his book: —

"In this my pilgrimage, 'I have passed many lands and countries, and searched many full strange places.' I have traversed France from Normandy to Navarre; smoked my pipe in a Flemish inn; floated through Holland in a Trekschuit; trimmed my midnight lamp in a German university; wandered and mused amid the classic scenes of Italy; and listened to the gay guitar and merry castanet on the borders of the blue Guadalquivir." (From *Outre-Mer: A Pilgrimage beyond the Sea.*) A characteristic passage showing how he relished his European travel is this: "My recollections of Spain are of the most lively and delightful kind. The character of the soil and of its inhabitants, — the stormy mountains and free spirits of the North, — the prodigal luxuriance and gay voluptuousness of the South, — the history and traditions of the past, resembling more the fables of romance than the solemn chronicle of events, — a soft and yet majestic language that falls like martial music on the ear, and a literature rich in the attractive lore of poetry and fiction, — these, but not these alone, are my reminiscences of Spain."

On his return to the United States, he took up at Bowdoin the wearing work of teaching, yet he entered upon it with enthusiasm in the belief that it would allow him time to write as he might be inclined. Instead of doing original work, however, he made text-books, excellent of their kind and for their purpose. He edited French texts, translated a French grammar, and made French, Spanish, and Italian readers. His recitations and lectures he prepared for painstakingly. The students liked him; he enjoyed them. His influence during his six years of teaching at Bowdoin was of the best. Other colleges tried to secure his services, but he preferred Bowdoin until a call came to follow Ticknor in the chair of modern lan-

guages at Harvard. Longfellow accepted and went abroad for further study, particularly of German, which he never cared for so much as the French and Spanish and Italian languages and literatures; in these he had already become extremely proficient. His acceptance of the Harvard professorship took him in the autumn of 1836 to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where, living for the remaining years of his life, he became a quiet but powerful influence for widening culture, and where, having more time to himself than at Bowdoin, he became the chief of the "Cambridge Poets." During his Harvard teaching he published several volumes of prose and poetry: *Hyperion, a Romance*, 1839; *Voices of the Night*, 1839, which contained translations and nine original poems; *Ballads, and Other Poems*, 1841; *Poems on Slavery*, 1842; *The Spanish Student*, a three-act play, 1843; *The Belfry of Bruges, and Other Poems*, 1845; *Evangeline*, 1847; *Kavanagh, a Tale*, 1849; *The Seaside and the Fireside*, 1849; and *The Golden Legend*, 1851. In the year 1854, he was succeeded at Harvard by his friend James Russell Lowell.

Thus far no mention has been made of Longfellow's domestic affairs. In 1831, at the age of twenty-two, he was married to Mary Storer Potter, of Portland. With her, for four years, he lived a contented, peaceful life. Mrs. Longfellow was beautiful in appearance, happy in disposition, and sympathetic and appreciative in her husband's intellectual work. The shock of her death in Holland while he was studying in preparation for his Harvard professorship changed Longfellow from a youth in spirit to a grown man. At Cambridge he took rooms in the Craigie House. This fine old colonial building is now pointed out to every Cambridge visitor as the Longfellow home, for here Longfellow lived the rest of his life, except for summers on the New England coast and several European journeys. In the hero of *Hyperion* he had

sketched his own bitterness of thought during the year following the death of his first wife, and in the heroine he had sketched the character of Miss Frances Appleton, who became in July, 1843, his second wife. At their marriage, Miss Appleton's father bought for them the Craigie mansion. Here, for some years, their life was like the home life of the best New England families of the day — children at play, fireside reading, entertainments, calls, concerts, plays, enough work to keep the domestic delight from palling by monotony of idleness. In the year 1854 Longfellow and his wife decided that they could afford to live without his salary as professor, and he resigned.

From 1854 till his death in 1882 Longfellow, relieved entirely from professional duties, did some of his best work as poet and man of letters. He continued to dream along in the peaceful existence already started at Cambridge, all the time growing in the affections of the people till the whole nation came to love him. Among the literary men of New England he was the dean. In the gatherings of the Saturday Club, which included Whittier, Emerson, Lowell, and Hawthorne among its members, Longfellow took particular joy. He was long a friend of Senator Charles Sumner. The young scholar Andrew D. White visited Longfellow in 1867 at his beautiful summer cottage at Nahant. In his *Autobiography* White speaks of Longfellow as "a most lovely being." As they sat on the veranda looking out over the ocean and discussing political events, the poet turned to the young scholar and statesman and said, "Mr. White, don't you think Horace Greeley a very useless sort of man?" The dreamy poet could not understand at all the point of view of the practical man of affairs, the great editor of the New York *Tribune*. Four years later White dined with the poet at his Cambridge home. The host enjoyed showing the places in this house that were connected

with interesting passages in the life of Washington when he occupied the house. These details given by Dr. White in his recollections afford a characteristic glimpse of the life of the celebrated Cambridge man of letters in this period of poetic ease.

In that curious back-hand of his, not so legible and print-like as Poe's handwriting, Longfellow produced in this second period enough original poetry, translation, and editorial work to make a small library. In narrative poetry he published *The Song of Hiawatha*, 1855, considered by many critics his greatest achievement because it is the nearest approach to an American epic. Narrative also is *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, published in 1858. This seems to me his greatest poem because it dwells with consummate poetical art upon a world-appreciated theme and because it gives with absolute faithfulness the spirit of the early New England Puritanism. *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, 1863, is a popular collection of local pictures and old-world stories in pleasing verse. His most ambitious production was published in 1872 under the heading *Christus, a Mystery;* it consisted of three parts, "The Divine Tragedy," "The Golden Legend," and "The New England Tragedies," and except for the second part, which had been already printed, is practically unread among its author's works. His other principal volumes of poems are "Aftermath," "The Hanging of the Crane," "Masque of Pandora," "Keramos," "Ultima Thule," and "In the Harbor." During this period he composed a group of sonnets which easily rank him as the chief American sonnet writer. The translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, 1870, is the crowning achievement of the scholar, postponed till his time of ease. Though not in every respect a great translation of Dante's epic, it is true to the original and not lacking in Dante's poetic fire. Longfellow's editorial work included the editing of thirty-one volumes of *Poems of*

Places. Such was the extensive work of the man of letters in Cambridge, from 1854 to 1882, in original poetry, in translation, and in compilation.

The life at Cambridge was not all happiness, for, eighteen years after his second marriage, his wife was burned so badly by the upturning of a candle on her dress that she soon died. Thereafter Longfellow lived in the Cambridge home with his children, the care and education of whom occupied his thoughts to the banishment of loneliness. It was only when his distinguished friends died, one by one, that he began to feel the weight of his years. In March, 1882, he died, and was buried in Cambridge. The period of his life in Cambridge was, curiously enough, almost exactly the time of the supremacy of New England as a literary center.

In the sketch of Longfellow's life, little mention has been made of specific short poems, such as "A Psalm of Life," "The Rainy Day" (written in the Portland home), "Excelsior," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "The Building of the Ship," "The Village Blacksmith," and "Paul Revere's Ride," which every schoolboy knows. It would have been superfluous to discuss these poems, for they have always appealed to the hearts of the American people and have done as much as the longer narrative poems to give their author his extraordinary popularity. But it was by such longer poems as *The Courtship of Miles Standish* that Longfellow established his claim to a place among the poets of world-wide appeal, and it was by such writing that he merited recognition in Westminster Abbey, the temple of fame for the English-speaking nations. There, two years after his death, a bust of Longfellow was placed, with ceremonies which testified to the esteem in which he is held by all who speak the English language.

LIFE OF WHITTIER, 1807–1892

In *The Appreciation of Literature*, George E. Woodberry speaks of Whittier's *Snow-Bound*, Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*, and Burns's *The Cotter's Saturday Night* as imperishable monuments to that "home-feeling which is so profound an element in the character as well as the affections of English-speaking people the world over." Inevitably popular are the poets who express this home-feeling. Next to Longfellow, Whittier has come closer to the heart of the nation than any other American poet. Known everywhere as the household Quaker poet, he is celebrated also as the poet who did more than any other to crystallize northern sentiment against slavery. These two phases of his work seem contradictory, but when his life is read in such an interesting and discriminating biography as that by George R. Carpenter in the American Men of Letters series, the contradiction is found to be apparent and not real, for Whittier was a poet appealing all the time to the best instincts of his nation. His life may best be considered in three periods: the first including his boyhood and early efforts at literature; the second, his freedom work; and the third, his life as a mature, tranquil poet. It was in this third period that he wrote his greatest poem, *Snow-Bound*.

The house where he was born on December 17, 1807, is one mile to the northeast of Haverhill, Essex County, Massachusetts, near Great Pond, known also as Lake Kenoza. This farmhouse is the scene of *Snow-Bound* and is now marked by a bronze tablet. Whittier's great-great-grandfather built the house about 1688; Whittiers had lived there ever since, all of them substantial pioneers and farmers of good repute, all of them husbands of farmers' daughters. The great-grandfather married a Quakeress, whose religion he adopted. The grandfather married Sarah Greenleaf. The poet was given the name of his

father and the family name of his grandmother. John Greenleaf Whittier started in life with a hundred and fifty years of New England independent struggle for existence back of him. In his youth he continued the struggle, but with a weaker body and more sensitive temperament than his ancestors possessed. He worked on the ancestral farm, with intermissions of shoe-making and academy attendance and school-teaching, until he was twenty-one. When he was nearly nineteen his first printed poem appeared in the Newburyport *Free Press.* Whittier had been led early to the writing of poetry by his reading of Burns, Gray, Cowper, Scott, and Mrs. Hemans; then when he was disappointed in love he read Byron. All of his own early poetry was imitative of the poets whom he had read. The Newburyport paper was edited by William Lloyd Garrison who subsequently became the great anti-slavery agitator and who influenced Whittier in this direction. In 1828 Whittier wrote to Garrison a letter commending his views on slavery, intemperance, and war.

Through Garrison's recommendation, Whittier, then just of age, left the farm and became editor, at nine dollars a week, of *The American Manufacturer*, published in Boston. After seven months he was called home to Haverhill by the sickness of his father, who died the next year. During the interval Whittier worked the farm and edited the local paper. A month after his father's death he became editor of *The New England Review*, of Hartford, Connecticut. This position made him conversant with the political events of the time, brought him a wide friendship among editors, and a national reputation through the copying of his Hartford articles in other papers. In his leisure hours in Boston and Hartford "the gay young Quaker" read much in the best English fiction and poetry. His first book, *Legends of New England,* exhibiting a little of the weirdness later character-

istic of Poe, was published in Hartford in 1831. Shortly after his return, in poor health, to Haverhill, he wrote to a friend that he had done with poetry and literature, and would now be a farmer. Yet he hankered for an election to Congress and might perhaps have secured it, through the confidence his neighbors had in his shrewdness and the esteem in which they held him because of his Boston and Hartford editorships, had he not definitely allied himself in 1833 with the abolitionist movement. Thus far, from his youthful prose and poetry, he had gained a reputation in literature second to none of his contemporaries, in spite of which nothing which he early wrote is at the present time much read. Now began the second period of his life.

As a reformer, from 1833 to 1860, striving with Quaker intensity to uphold the principle of the equality of man, Whittier won the respect of the nation and the hootings of particular crowds. This was the time of his greatest effort in life; in these years he accomplished what he considered to be his most valuable service to his country. Not literature, but abolition, was his chief interest. Yet, since slavery is no more, we are now concerned rather with Whittier's literary life than with his life as a reformer and so must pass quickly over this second phase of his career. In June, 1833, influenced by the appeals of his friend Garrison to throw his influence into the cause of abolition, he published, at his own expense, a pamphlet entitled, "Justice and Expediency: or, Slavery Considered with a View to Its Rightful and Effectual Remedy, Abolition." This pamphlet illustrates Whittier's part in the abolition movement; he continued for more than twenty-five years to write essays and poems aiming to appeal to the reason and to bring about the abolition of slavery by public opinion as expressed by votes. He was one of the secretaries of the first national anti-slavery convention in Philadelphia and signed its declaration. In

1835 he was a member of the Massachusetts legislature. In Concord, New Hampshire, he was mobbed in company with George Thompson, the English anti-slavery agitator. He kept Thompson, whose life was in danger, hidden for two weeks in the farmhouse. Soon after, during the rioting by a mob in Washington Street, Boston, Whittier was threatened with personal violence. A little later he was in New York for several months in the office of the American anti-slavery society, and almost became engaged to a young lady of Brooklyn. In 1838, when he was in Philadelphia editing the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, his office was sacked and burned by a mob, but he saved some of his belongings by disguising himself in a long white coat and a wig so that he could mingle with the mob without being known. He kept on editing the paper till his health failed.

Then he took up his residence with his mother, aunt, and younger sister, Elizabeth, in Amesbury, eight miles from his birthplace, in a house which is now maintained as a memorial of the poet. Here his mother died in 1858. He edited at Lowell, Massachusetts, *The Middlesex Standard* in 1844, and in 1847 became corresponding editor of *The National Era*, published at Washington. In 1849 he received five hundred dollars for the copyright of all his verse thus far published. Next year, he met James T. Fields, the friend of all the New England poets, and hereafter his poems were published by Ticknor and Fields. In 1857 this firm brought out his collected poems. In spite of his numerous reform articles and poems, including the famous poem "Ichabod" and the volumes entitled *Voices of Freedom* and *Songs of Labor*, in spite of his five prose volumes containing wonderfully keen essays analyzing and depicting early New England life and character, and in spite of a number of poems of national reputation, such as "The Barefoot Boy," "Skipper Ireson's Ride," and "Maud Muller," written from 1833

to 1860, he would hardly be assured a permanent place among the best American poets, if he had not in the maturity of his years returned to the themes of his boyhood and written one imperishable poem on the New England life as he knew it when he was a boy.

Since Whittier was a reformer, with his soul on fire for the abolition of slavery, it might be thought that a fitting end to the second period of his life would be the end of the war rather than the beginning. But no! As a Quaker, Whittier had a horror of war; he sympathized with the North, but he believed it would be better to let the South go rather than to fight. Thus he turned from his one absorbing great passion, his contention for freedom, to a tranquil life as a poet, a period of thirty-two years (from 1860 to 1892), in no part of which because of ill health was he able to do a full day's work and in most of which he found it impossible to read or write for more than a half-hour at a time. In these years he grew steadily in the affections of the people. During the war his verses were cries of those who were bereaved and prayers for God to let the right be done. Some of his songs were sung by the northern soldiers, President Lincoln saying that he wanted the soldiers to hear such songs as Whittier's. His ballad of "Barbara Frietchie" and his "Laus Deo" are his best known poems produced in war times.

After the war he wrote a number of religious poems which appear in collections of hymns sung by various denominations. "I have been a member of the Society of Friends by birthright and by a settled conviction of the truth of its principles and the importance of its testimonies, while, at the same time, I have a kind feeling towards all who are seeking, in different ways from mine, to serve God and benefit their fellow-men." Thus Whittier wrote regarding his religious faith. It was this breadth of sympathy that made his religious songs acceptable to all true worshipers.

Snow-Bound, which he says he wrote to beguile the weariness of a sick-room, at once became one of the "best sellers" of the day. From the time of its publication in 1866, the surprising profits from its sale made Whittier a well-to-do man. Among the other poems of this period are "The Maids of Attitash," "Among the Hills," "Amy Wentworth," "My Playmate," "The Henchman," and "Sea Dream." But *Snow-Bound* is the poem on which Whittier's fame as a poet most securely rests.

After the death of his sister, in 1864, his brother's daughter, Elizabeth Whittier, kept house for him at Amesbury until her marriage in 1876 to S. T. Pickard, who became his biographer. Whittier continued to vote at Amesbury, but spent much of his time with his cousins, the Misses Johnson, at Oak Knoll, Danvers, Massachusetts. At Amesbury, this kindly old bachelor, famous as he was, used to like to sit in the shop of the village tailor and talk with his neighbors. Occasionally he traveled to Boston to see his publishers and enjoy an evening with the Saturday Club, to which Longfellow also belonged. He spent his summers on Lake Winnepesaukee or at the Isles of Shoals or at Amesbury. The life all the year was easier and quieter than in earlier days. He wrote when he felt inclined; he had an income more than sufficient for his simple needs. He had not many close friends, though numerous acquaintances, among the contemporary men of letters: Bayard Taylor, Holmes, Hawthorne, Emerson, Lowell, and Longfellow; the southern poet, Paul Hamilton Hayne, who was much attracted by his broad spirit; the English writers, Dickens and Kingsley. Much of his time he spent in writing letters to gifted ladies — Lucy Larcom, Alice and Phœbe Cary, Celia Thaxter, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Mrs. Fields.

In 1877, when he was seventy years old, he was the guest of honor at a dinner given by the publishers of

The Atlantic Monthly to distinguished contributors. Ten years later, on his eightieth birthday, he was congratulated at Oak Knoll by the governor of the state and a committee, for he was nearly the last of the great New England abolitionists and poets. In 1892 he died and was buried in the village cemetery at Amesbury, where the other members of his family had been buried before him.

He was, as one of his biographers says, the last survivor of the circle that gathered about the hearth in the snow-bound homestead. Such was his art in the unique and imperishable poem, *Snow-Bound*, that there is no family in the world whose members are so widely known among the people who speak the English tongue.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

POE, LONGFELLOW, AND WHITTIER

It [the early part of the nineteenth century] was a time of emotionalism in verse. Emotionalism revealed itself in the love of the mediæval and the oriental, — both realms in which conventionalism seemed absent; in the keener sentiments with which scenery was regarded, as if the power of sight had been stimulated and trained; in a fondness for the exquisitely beautiful, for the wild and terrible and extraordinary; in a desire to be thrilled by tales of madness and crime, to be torn with sympathy for the suffering; in religious fervor and in enthusiasm for humanitarian reform. This great quickening of the emotions made Scott and Byron and Shelley and Keats, and just as surely it declared itself [a little later] in Whittier and Longfellow and Lowell, in Hawthorne and Emerson, brother romanticists all.

Whittier's part in this movement was important. Bryant had already produced his noble early poems, inspired by the austere life and austere scenery surrounding him in his childhood; Lowell was a frivolous boy. Brainard, the man of greatest promise, was dead; Willis, although so popular, was of no real importance; and the leaders in the obscure forward march were Poe, Longfellow, and Whittier. To Poe, as a disciple of Coleridge, belonged the advance on the purely artistic side, the evolution of melody. Longfellow was an avowed scholar, though destined to come back to poetry with the intent of creating a literature on foreign models.

Whittier was the only man of genius who was attacking the problem directly. — *George R. Carpenter*, in *John Greenleaf Whittier*.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

On the roll of our literature Poe's name is inscribed with the few foremost, and in the world at large his genius is established as valid among all men. Much as he derived nurture from other sources, he was the son of Coleridge by the weird touch of his imagination, by the principles of his analytic criticism, and the speculative bent of his mind. An artist primarily, whose skill, helped by the finest sensitive and perceptive powers in himself, was developed by thought, patience, and endless self-correction into a subtle deftness of hand unsurpassed in its own work, he belonged to the men of culture instead of those of originally perfect power; but being gifted with the dreaming instinct, the myth-making faculty, the allegorizing power, and with no other poetic element of high genius, he exercised his art in a region of vague feeling, symbolic ideas, and fantastic imagery, and wrought his spell largely through sensuous effects of color, sound, and gloom, heightened by lurking but unshaped suggestions of mysterious meanings. Now and then gleams of light and stretches of lovely landscape shine out, but for the most part his mastery was over dismal, superstitious, and waste places. In imagination, as in action, his was an evil genius; and in its realms of revery he dwelt alone. Except the wife who idolized him and the mother who cared for him, no one touched his heart in the years of his manhood, and at no time was love so strong in him as to rule his life. — *George E. Woodberry*, in *The Life of Edgar Allan Poe*.

Without doubt, a distinctive melody is the element in

Poe's verse that first and last has told on every class of readers, — a rhythmical effect which, be it of much or little worth, was its author's own; and to add even one constituent to the resources of an art is what few succeed in doing. He gained hints from other poets toward this contribution, but the *timbre* of his own voice was required for that peculiar music reinforced by the correlative refrain and repetend; a melody, but a monody as well, limited almost to the vibratory recurrence of a single and typical emotion, yet no more palling the ear than palls the constant sound of a falling stream. It haunted rather than irked the senses, so that the poet was recognized by it, — as Melmoth the Wanderer by the one delicious strain heard whenever he approached. This brought him, on the other hand, the slight of many compeers, and for this the wisest of them spoke of him as the "jingle-man." Yet there is more than this, one may well conceive, in his station as a poet. — *E. C. Stedman* and *G. E. Woodberry*, in *The Poems of Edgar Allan Poe.*

Poe has two of the prime qualities of genius: a faculty of vigorous, yet minute, analysis, and a wonderful fecundity of imagination. . . . Besides the merit of conception, Mr. Poe's writings have also that of form. His style is highly finished, graceful, and truly classical. It would be hard to find a living author who had displayed such varied powers. . . . The great masters of imagination have seldom resorted to the vague and the unreal as sources of effect. They have not used dread and horror alone, but only in combination with other qualities, as means of subjugating the fancies of their readers. The loftiest muse has ever a household and fireside charm about her. Mr. Poe's secret lies mainly in the skill with which he has employed the strange fascination of mystery and terror. In this his success is so great and striking as to deserve the name of art, not artifice. We cannot

call his materials the noblest or the purest, but we must concede to him the highest merit of construction. . . . On the whole, it may be considered certain that Mr. Poe has attained an individual eminence in our literature which he will keep. He has given proof of power and originality. He has done that which could only be done once with success or safety, and the imitation or repetition of which would produce weariness. — *James Russell Lowell*, in *Graham's Magazine*, February, 1845.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

His heart was pure, his purpose high,
His thought serene, his patience vast;
He put all strifes of passion by,
And lived to God, from first to last.

William Winter, in *The N. Y. Tribune.*

It is no small thing for a singer to have a heart so pure and simple, an intellect so little isolated by years of foreign travel, of special study, of long association with men of distinction, that there is no barrier between him and the heart and intelligence of the people at large, of nineteen-twentieths of the race. Of American poets, only Whittier approached Longfellow in this respect of wide acceptation, and he was less national in his appeal; of modern British poets, only Scott. And Longfellow must be praised for the uses he made of this high opportunity. He familiarizes his readers with the grace and flow of verse, with its melody and harmony. He introduces them to the beauty of olden times, of remote places, of foreign literature. He reveals to them the glory of the elementary virtues — faith and hope and love, optimism and aspiration. — *George R. Carpenter*, in *Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (Beacon Biographies).

There was a notable sanity about all Longfellow's mode of life, and his attitude toward books and nature and men. It was the positive which attracted him, the achievement in literature, the large, seasonable gifts of the outer world, the men and women themselves who were behind the deeds and words which made them known. The books which he read, as noted in his journals, were the generous books; he wanted the best wine of thought, and he avoided criticism. He basked in sunshine; he watched the sky, and was alive to the great sights and sounds and to all the tender influences of the seasons. In his intercourse with men, this sanity appeared in the power which he showed of preserving his own individuality in the midst of constant pressure from all sides; he gave of himself freely to his intimate friends, but he dwelt, nevertheless, in a charmed circle, beyond the lines of which men could not penetrate. Praise did not make him arrogant or vain; criticism, though it sometimes wounded him, did not turn him from his course. It is rare that one in our time has been the center of so much admiration, and still rarer that one has preserved in the midst of it all that integrity of nature which never abdicates. — *Horace E. Scudder*, in *Men and Letters: Essays in Characterization and Criticism.*

In estimating the life-work of Longfellow as a poet, the personality and the product cannot be separated. The sweet and sympathetic and strong and self-reliant soul, so fully portrayed in the three-volume life by the poet's brother, ever animates the verse. Longfellow looked out upon life and sang his thoughts concerning its joys and its mysteries. His lyrics and idyls and dramatic studies and reflective poems illuminate with catholic sympathy and quiet optimism the procession of human existence: childhood, youth with its loves and hopes, middle-life with its wasting and weariness and patiently

continued work, death as the transition to another stage of progress and experience. His poems lack not thought, nor feeling, nor art, but well combine the three. What he misses in intellectual greatness he possesses in heartfulness. He was the St. John of our American apostles of song. His word was spoken to those who work and win, struggle and lose, love and bury. He ranged from the American hearthstone to the castle-towers of the Rhine. He adorned the simplest thought with spoils of mediæval and continental culture. An American, he was too wise to refuse to learn of Europe. A man of culture, he knew as well as Hawthorne, that mere selfish intellectual wisdom turns the heart to stone. A man of books, he carried his sympathies with him as he entered his library door. His reading was bent toward the betterment and the utterance of his good impulses, and not to their crushing. A lifelong moralizer, he shunned cant as the twin-devil of hypocrisy. He made the most of himself, in life and letters. Neither Providence nor error cut short his earthly service to song. We dare not say that his service shall last

> "As long as the river flows,
> As long as the heart has passions,
> As long as life has woes";

but it will be until another shall sing the same songs better. — *Charles F. Richardson*, in *American Literature: 1607–1885*.

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

He was not one of the royally endowed, far-shining, "myriad-minded" poets. He was rustic, provincial; a man of his place and time in America. It is doubtful if European readers will ever find him richly suggestive, as they have found Emerson, Poe, and Whitman. But

he had a tenacious hold upon certain realities: first, upon the soil of New England, of whose history and legend he became such a sympathetic interpreter; next, upon "the good old cause" of freedom, not only in his own country but in all places where the age-long and still but half-won battle was being waged; and finally, upon some permanent objects of human emotion, — the hill-top, shore and sky, the fireside, the troubled heart that seeks rest in God. Whittier's poetry has revealed to countless readers the patient continuity of human life, its fundamental unity, and the ultimate peace that hushes its discords. The utter simplicity of his Quaker's creed has helped him to interpret the religious mood of a generation which has grown impatient of formal doctrine. His hymns are sung by almost every body of Christians, the world over. It is unlikely that the plain old man who passed quietly away in a New Hampshire village on September 7, 1892, aged eighty-five, will ever be reckoned one of the world-poets. But he was, in the best sense of the word, a world's man in heart and in action, a sincere and noble soul who hated whatever was evil and helped to make the good prevail; and his verse, fiery and tender and unfeigned, will long be cherished by his countrymen. —*Bliss Perry*, in *J. G. Whittier. A Sketch of His Life.*

Whittier as a poet is too well known to the American reader to call for any elaborate analysis of his style. As we turn over the collective edition of his poems, we are astonished to see the number of pieces that have become household words. Mogg Megone, Maud Muller, The Angels of Buena Vista, The Vaudois Teacher, My Soul and I, A Dream of Summer, Songs of Labor, The Barefoot Boy, Skipper Ireson's Ride, Barbara Frietchie — what a host of associations the very names evoke! They and their twin brethren have long since passed into the hearts of the poet's countrymen. They are a

part of ourselves. If we seek for the causes of this real popularity, we shall find one cause of it at least in Whittier's intense nationality. Bryant excepted, there is not an American poet who can, in this respect, be compared with Whittier. Setting aside a few, very few, songs on borrowed themes, we may say that everything that Whittier has written comes directly home to the American. What, for instance, can be more beautiful in its genial simplicity and also more characteristic than *Snow-Bound?* It may safely be ranked among the sweetest, most endearing idyls of the language. In it we see the fiery crusader of the *Voices of Freedom* softened and mellowed into the retrospective artist. The period of fermentation has passed, the purification is complete. Harsh numbers are tuned to perfect accord; hatred of oppression has made way for broad humanity. If we read the *Proem* of 1847 side by side with *Snow-Bound* we shall have little difficulty in persuading ourselves that Whittier has not only nothing to fear from a comparison with melodious Spenser and Sidney, but has even surpassed them in artistic reality. — *J. S. Hart.*

The American traveler in England who takes pains to inquire in bookstores as to the comparative standing of his country's poets among English readers, is likely to hear Longfellow ranked at the head, with Whittier a close second. In the same way, if he happens to attend English conventions and popular meetings, he will be pretty sure to hear these two authors quoted oftener than any other poets, British or American. This parallelism in their fame makes it the more interesting to remember that Whittier was born within five miles of the old Longfellow homestead, where the grandfather of his brother poet was born. Always friends, though never intimate, they represented through life two quite different modes of rearing and education. Longfellow

was the most widely traveled author of the Boston circle, Whittier the least so; Longfellow spoke a variety of languages, Whittier only his own; Longfellow had whatever the American college of his time could give him, Whittier had none of it; Longfellow had the habits of a man of the world, Whittier those of a recluse; Longfellow touched reform but lightly, Whittier was essentially involved with it; Longfellow had children and grandchildren, while Whittier led a single life. Yet in certain gifts, apart from poetic quality, they were alike; both being modest, serene, unselfish, brave, industrious, and generous. They either shared, or made up between them, the highest and most estimable qualities that mark poet or man. — *Thomas Wentworth Higginson,* in *John Greenleaf Whittier* (English Men of Letters Series).

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE RAVEN

Once upon[1] a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore —
While I nodded, nearly napping,[2] suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door,
"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door —
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,[3]
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost[4] upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; — vainly I had sought[5] to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow — sorrow for the lost Lenore —

For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore [1] —
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain [2]
Thrilled me — filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,
"'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door —
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you" — here I opened wide the door ——
Darkness [3] there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there
wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams[1] no mortal ever dared
to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness[2]
gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered
word "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the
word, "Lenore!" —
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning,[3] all my soul within
me burning,
Soon again I heard[4] a tapping something louder
than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my
window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is,[5] and this mystery
explore —
Let my heart be still a moment, and this mystery
explore; —
'Tis the wind and nothing more."

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a
flirt and flutter,

In there stepped a stately Raven [1] of the saintly
days of yore.
Not the least obeisance made he, not a minute
stopped or stayed he,
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my
chamber door —
Perched upon a bust of Pallas [2] just above my
chamber door —
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird [3] beguiling my sad fancy into
smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance
it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I
said, "art sure no craven.
Ghastly, grim, and ancient Raven wandering from
the Nightly shore —
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's
Plutonian shore!" [4]
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore." [5]

Much I marveled this ungainly fowl to hear [6] dis-
course so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning — little relevancy
bore;

For we cannot help agreeing that no living human [1]
being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his
chamber door —
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his
chamber door —
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust,[2]
spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he
did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered; not a feather then
he fluttered —
Till I scarcely more than muttered, "Other friends
have flown before —
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my Hopes have
flown before."
Then the bird said,[3] "Nevermore."

Startled [4] at the stillness broken by reply so aptly
spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only
stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerci-
ful Disaster

Followed fast [1] and followed faster till his songs one burden bore —
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never — nevermore.'"

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul [2] into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore —
What this grim, ungainly,[3] ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet [4] lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,

But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censor
Swung by Seraphim [1] whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," [2] I cried, "thy God hath lent thee — by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite — respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe [3] and forget this lost Lenore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

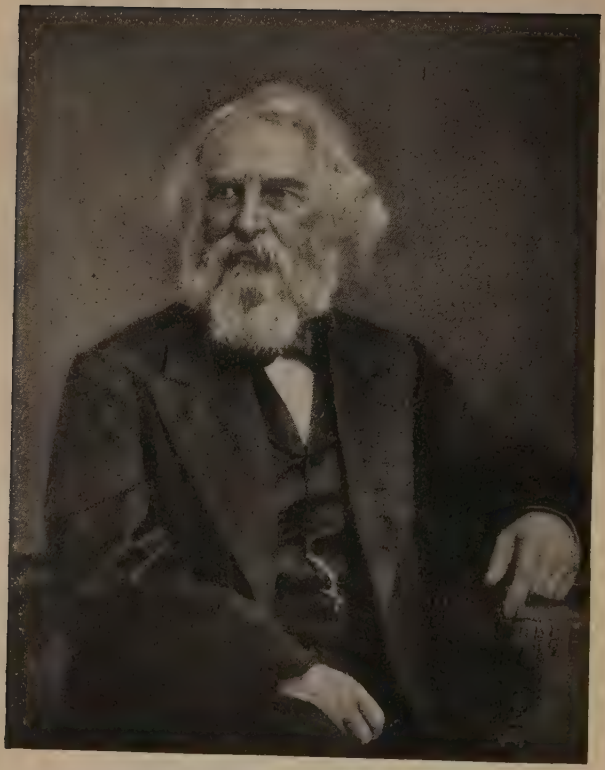
"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! [4] — prophet still, if bird or devil! —
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted —
On this home by Horror haunted — tell me truly, I implore —
Is there — *is* there balm in Gilead? [5] — tell me — tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil — prophet still,
if bird or devil! —
By that Heaven that bends above us — by that
God,[1] we both adore —
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the dis-
tant Aidenn,[2]
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels
name Lenore —
Clasp a rare and radiant [3] maiden whom the angels
name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!"
I shrieked, upstarting —
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's
Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy
soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! — quit the bust
above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart,[4] and take thy
form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still
is sitting

On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's [1] that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light [2] o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted — nevermore!



HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

¡Poor Miles!

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

THE COURTSHIP OF MILES STANDISH

I

MILES STANDISH

In the Old Colony days,[1] in Plymouth the land of the Pilgrims,
To and fro in a room of his simple and primitive dwelling,
Clad in doublet and hose, and boots of Cordovan[2] leather,
Strode, with martial air, Miles Standish[3] the Puritan Captain.

Buried in thought he seemed, with his hands behind
him, and pausing
Ever and anon to behold his glittering weapons of
warfare,
Hanging in shining array along the walls of his
chamber,—
Cutlass and corselet of steel, and his trusty sword
of Damascus,[1]
Curved [2] at the point and inscribed with its mystical
Arabic sentence,
While underneath, in a corner, were fowling-piece,
musket, and matchlock.
Short of stature he was, but strongly built and
athletic,
Broad in the shoulders, deep-chested, with muscles
and sinews of iron;
Brown as a nut was his face, but his russet beard
was already
Flaked with patches of snow, as hedges sometimes
in November.
Near him was seated John Alden,[3] his friend and
household companion,
Writing with diligent speed at a table of pine by
the window;
Fair-haired, azure-eyed, with delicate Saxon com-
plexion,

Having the dew of his youth, and the beauty thereof, as the captives
Whom Saint Gregory saw, and exclaimed, "Not Angles [1] but Angels."
Youngest of all was he of the men who came in the Mayflower.

Suddenly breaking the silence, the diligent scribe [2] interrupting,
Spake, in the pride of his heart, Miles Standish the Captain of Plymouth.
"Look at these arms," he said, "the warlike weapons that hang here
Burnished and bright and clean, as if for parade or inspection!
This is the sword of Damascus I fought with in Flanders; [3] this breastplate,—
Well I remember the day! once saved my life in a skirmish;
Here in front you can see the very dint of the bullet
Fired point-blank at my heart by a Spanish arcabucero.[4]
Had it not been of sheer steel, the forgotten bones of Miles Standish
Would at this moment be mold, in their grave in the Flemish morasses."

Thereupon answered John Alden, but looked not
up from his writing:
"Truly the breath[1] of the Lord hath slackened the
speed of the bullet;
He in his mercy preserved you, to be our shield and
our weapon!"
Still the Captain continued, unheeding the words
of the stripling
"See, how bright they are burnished, as if in an
arsenal hanging;
That is because I have done it myself, and not left
it to others.
Serve yourself,[2] would you be well served, is an
excellent adage;
So I take care of my arms, as you of your pens and
your inkhorn.
Then, too, there are my soldiers, my great, invin-
cible army,
Twelve men, all equipped, having each his rest[3]
and his matchlock,
Eighteen shillings a month, together with diet and
pillage,
And, like Cæsar, I know the name of each of my
soldiers!"
This he said with a smile, that danced in his eyes,
as the sunbeams

Dance on the waves of the sea, and vanish again in a moment.
Alden laughed[1] as he wrote, and still the Captain continued:
"Look! you can see from this window my brazen howitzer planted
High on the roof of the church, a preacher[2] who speaks to the purpose,
Steady, straightforward, and strong, with irresistible logic,
Orthodox, flashing conviction right into the hearts of the heathen.
Now we are ready, I think, for any assault of the Indians:
Let them come if they like, and the sooner they try it the better,—
Let them come if they like, be it sagamore,[3] sachem, or pow-wow,
Aspinet, Samoset, Corbitant, Squanto, or Tokamahamon!"

Long at the window he stood, and wistfully gazed on the landscape,
Washed with a cold gray mist, the vapory breath of the east wind,
Forest[4] and meadow and hill, and the steel-blue rim of the ocean,

Lying silent and sad, in the afternoon shadows and sunshine.
Over his countenance flitted a shadow like those on the landscape,
Gloom intermingled with light; and his voice was subdued with emotion,
Tenderness, pity, regret, as after a pause he proceeded:
"Yonder there, on the hill by the sea, lies buried Rose Standish;
Beautiful rose of love, that bloomed for me by the wayside!
She was the first to die of all who came in the Mayflower!
Green above her is growing the field of wheat we have sown there,
Better to hide from the Indian scouts the graves of our people,
Lest they should count them and see how many already have perished!"
Sadly his face he averted, and strode up and down, and was thoughtful.

Fixed to the opposite wall was a shelf of books, and among them
Prominent three,[1] distinguished alike for bulk and for binding;

Barriffe's Artillery Guide,[1] and the Commentaries[2]
of Cæsar,
Out of the Latin translated by Arthur Goldinge of
London,
And, as if guarded by these, between them was
standing the Bible.
Musing a moment before them, Miles Standish
paused, as if doubtful
Which of the three he should choose for his conso-
lation and comfort,
Whether the wars of the Hebrews, the famous cam-
paigns of the Romans,
Or the Artillery practice, designed for belligerent
Christians.
Finally down from its shelf he dragged the ponder-
ous Roman,
Seated himself at the window, and opened the book,
and in silence
Turned o'er the well-worn leaves, where thumb-
marks thick[3] on the margin,
Like the trample of feet, proclaimed the battle was
hottest.
Nothing was heard in the room but the hurrying
pen of the stripling,
Busily writing epistles important, to go by the
Mayflower,

Ready to sail on the morrow, or next day at latest, God willing!
Homeward bound[1] with the tidings of all that terrible winter,
Letters written by Alden, and full of the name of Priscilla,
Full of the name and the fame of the Puritan maiden Priscilla!

II

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Nothing was heard in the room but the hurrying pen of the stripling,
Or an occasional sigh from the laboring heart of the Captain,
Reading the marvelous words and achievements of Julius Cæsar.
After a while he exclaimed, as he smote with his hand, palm downwards,
Heavily on the page: "A wonderful man was this Cæsar!
You are a writer, and I am a fighter, but here is a fellow
Who could both write and fight, and in both was equally skillful!"

Straightway answered and spake John Alden, the comely, the youthful:

"Yes, he was equally skilled, as you say, with his pen and his weapons.

Somewhere have I read, but where I forget, he could dictate

Seven letters at once, at the same time writing his memoirs."

"Truly," continued the Captain, not heeding or hearing the other,

"Truly a wonderful man was this Caius Julius Cæsar!

'Better be first,'[1] he said, 'in a little Iberian village,

Than be second in Rome,' and I think he was right when he said it.

Twice was he married before he was twenty, and many times after;

Battles five hundred he fought, and a thousand cities he conquered;

He, too, fought in Flanders, as he himself has recorded;

Finally he was stabbed by his friend, the orator Brutus!

Now, do you know what he did on a certain occasion in Flanders,

When the rear guard of his army retreated, the front giving way too,
And the immortal Twelfth Legion was crowded so closely together
There was no room for their swords? Why, he seized a shield from a soldier,
Put himself straight at the head of his troops, and commanded the captains,
Calling on each by his name, to order forward the ensigns;
Then to widen the ranks, and give more room for their weapons;
So he won the day, the battle of something-or-other.
That's what I always say; if you wish a thing to be well done,
You must do it yourself, you must not leave it to others!"

All was silent again; the Captain continued his reading.
Nothing was heard[1] in the room but the hurrying pen of the stripling
Writing epistles important to go next day by the Mayflower,
Filled with the name and the fame of the Puritan maiden Priscilla;

Every sentence began or closed with the name of Priscilla,[1]
Till the treacherous pen, to which he confided the secret,
Strove to betray it by singing and shouting the name of Priscilla!
Finally closing his book, with a bang of the ponderous cover,
Sudden and loud as the sound of a soldier grounding his musket,
Thus to the young man spake Miles Standish the Captain of Plymouth:
"When you have finished your work, I have something important to tell you.
Be not, however, in haste; I can wait; I shall not be impatient!"
Straightway Alden replied, as he folded the last of his letters,
Pushing his papers aside, and giving respectful attention:
"Speak; for whenever you speak, I am always ready to listen,
Always ready to hear whatever pertains to Miles Standish."
Thereupon answered the Captain, embarrassed, and culling his phrases:

"'Tis not good for a man to be alone, say the Scriptures.[1]
This I have said before, and again and again I repeat it;
Every hour in the day, I think, and feel it, and say it.
Since Rose Standish died, my life has been weary and dreary;
Sick at heart have I been, beyond the healing of friendship.
Oft in my lonely hours have I thought of the maiden Priscilla.
She is alone in the world;[2] her father and mother and brother
Died in the winter together; I saw her going and coming,
Now to the grave of the dead, and now to the bed of the dying,
Patient, courageous, and strong, and said to myself, that if ever
There were angels on earth, as there are angels in heaven,
Two have I seen and known; and the angel whose name is Priscilla
Holds in my desolate life the place which the other abandoned.

Long have I cherished the thought, but never have
dared to reveal it,
Being a coward in this, though valiant enough for
the most part.
Go to the damsel Priscilla, the loveliest maiden of
Plymouth,
Say that a blunt old Captain, a man not of words
but of actions,
Offers his hand and his heart, the hand and heart of
a soldier.
Not in these words, you know, but this in short is
my meaning;
I am a maker of war, and not a maker of phrases.
You, who are bred as a scholar, can say it in ele-
gant language,
Such as you read in your books of the pleadings
and wooings of lovers,
Such as you think best adapted to win the heart of
a maiden."

When he had spoken, John Alden, the fair-haired,
taciturn[1] stripling,
All aghast at his words, surprised, embarrassed,
bewildered,
Trying to mask his dismay by treating the subject
with lightness,

Trying to smile, and yet feeling his heart stand still in his bosom,
Just as a timepiece [1] stops in a house that is stricken by lightning,
Thus made answer and spake, or rather stammered than answered:
"Such a message as that, I am sure I should mangle and mar it;
If you would have it well done,— I am only repeating your maxim,[2]—
You must do it yourself, you must not leave it to others!"
But with the air of a man whom nothing can turn from his purpose,
Gravely shaking his head, made answer the Captain of Plymouth:
"Truly the maxim is good, and I do not mean to gainsay it;
But we must use it discreetly, and not waste powder for nothing.
Now, as I said before, I was never a maker of phrases.
I can march up to a fortress and summon the place to surrender,
But march up to a woman with such a proposal, I dare not.

I'm not afraid of bullets, nor shot from the mouth
of a cannon,
But of a thundering 'No!' point-blank from the
mouth of a woman,
That, I confess, I'm afraid of, nor am I ashamed to
confess it!
So you must grant my request, for you are an ele-
gant scholar,
Having the graces of speech, and skill in the turning
of phrases."
Taking the hand of his friend, who still was reluctant
and doubtful,
Holding it long in his own, and pressing it kindly,
he added:
"Though I have spoken thus lightly, yet deep is
the feeling that prompts me;
Surely you cannot refuse what I ask in the name of
our friendship!"
Then made answer John Alden: "The name of
friendship is sacred;
What you demand in that name, I have not the
power to deny you!"
So the strong will prevailed, subduing and molding
the gentler,
Friendship prevailed over love, and Alden went on
his errand.

III

THE LOVER'S ERRAND

So the strong will prevailed,[1] and Alden went on his errand,
Out of the street of the village, and into the paths of the forest,
Into the tranquil woods, where bluebirds and robins were building
Towns in the populous trees, with hanging gardens[2] of verdure,
Peaceful, aërial cities of joy and affection and freedom.
All around him was calm, but with him commotion and conflict,
Love contending with friendship, and self with each generous impulse.
To and fro in his breast his thoughts were heaving and dashing,
As in a foundering ship, with every roll of the vessel,
Washes the bitter sea, the merciless surge of the ocean!
"Must I relinquish it all," he cried with a wild lamentation,—
"Must I relinquish it all, the joy, the hope, the illusion?

Was it for this I have loved, and waited, and worshiped in silence?
Was it for this I have followed the flying feet [1] and the shadow
Over the wintry sea, to the desolate shores of New England?
Truly the heart is deceitful, and out of its depths of corruption
Rise, like an exhalation, the misty phantoms of passion;
Angels of light they seem, but are only delusions of Satan.
All is clear to me now; I feel it, I see it distinctly!
This is the hand of the Lord; it is laid upon me in anger,
For I have followed too much the heart's desires and devices,
Worshiping Astaroth blindly, and impious idols of Baal.[2]
This is the cross I must bear; the sin and the swift retribution."

So through the Plymouth woods John Alden went on his errand;
Crossing the brook at the ford, where it brawled over pebble and shallow,

Gathering still, as he went, the mayflowers blooming around him,
Fragrant, filling the air with a strange and wonderful sweetness,
Children[1] lost in the woods, and covered with leaves in their slumber.
"Puritan flowers," he said, "and the type of Puritan maidens,
Modest and simple and sweet, the very type of Priscilla!
So I will take them to her; to Priscilla the mayflower of Plymouth,
Modest and simple and sweet, as a parting gift will I take them;
Breathing their silent farewells, as they fade and wither and perish,
Soon to be thrown away as is the heart of the giver."
So through the Plymouth woods John Alden went on his errand;
Came to an open space, and saw the disk of the ocean,
Sailless, somber and cold with the comfortless breath of the east wind;
Saw the new-built house, and people at work in a meadow:

Heard, as he drew near the door, the musical voice of Priscilla
Singing the hundredth Psalm, the grand old Puritan anthem,
Music that Luther sang to the sacred words of the Psalmist,
Full of the breath of the Lord, consoling and comforting many.
Then, as he opened the door, he beheld the form of the maiden
Seated beside her wheel, and the carded wool [1] like a snowdrift
Piled at her knee, her white hands feeding the ravenous spindle,
While with her foot on the treadle she guided the wheel in its motion.
Open wide on her lap lay the well-worn psalmbook of Ainsworth,
Printed in Amsterdam, the words and the music together,
Rough-hewn, angular notes, like stones in the wall of a churchyard,
Darkened and overhung by the running vine of the verses.
Such was the book from whose pages she sang the old Puritan anthem,[2]
She, the Puritan girl, in the solitude of the forest,

Making the humble house and the modest apparel
of homespun
Beautiful with her beauty, and rich with the wealth
of her being!
Over him rushed, like a wind that is keen and cold
and relentless,
Thoughts of what might have been, and the weight
and woe of his errand;
All the dreams that had faded, and all the hopes
that had vanished,
All his life[1] henceforth a dreary and tenantless
mansion,
Haunted by vain regrets, and pallid, sorrowful
faces.
Still he said to himself, and almost fiercely he said it,
"Let not him that putteth his hand to the plow[2]
look backwards;
Though the plowshare cut through the flowers of
life to its fountains,
Though it pass o'er the graves of the dead and the
hearths of the living,
It is the will of the Lord; and his mercy endureth
forever!"[3]

So he entered the house; and the hum of the
wheel and the singing

Suddenly ceased; for Priscilla, aroused by his step
on the threshold,
Rose as he entered, and gave him her hand, in
signal of welcome,
Saying, "I knew it was you, when I heard your
step in the passage;
For I was thinking of you, as I sat there singing
and spinning."
Awkward and dumb with delight, that a thought
of him had been mingled
Thus in the sacred psalm, that came from the heart
of the maiden,
Silent before her he stood, and gave her the flowers
for an answer,
Finding no words for his thought. He remembered
that day in the winter,
After the first great snow, when he broke a path
from the village,
Reeling and plunging along through the drifts that
encumbered the doorway,
Stamping the snow from his feet as he entered the
house, and Priscilla
Laughed at his snowy locks, and gave him a seat
by the fireside,
Grateful and pleased to know he had thought of
her in the snow-storm.

Had he but spoken then perhaps not in vain had
he spoken!
Now it was all too late; the golden moment had
vanished!
So he stood there abashed, and gave her the flowers
for an answer.

Then they sat down and talked of the birds and
the beautiful springtime;
Talked of their friends at home, and the Mayflower
that sailed on the morrow.
"I have been thinking all day," said gently the
Puritan maiden,
"Dreaming all night, and thinking all day, of the
hedgerows of England,—
They are in blossom now, and the country is all
like a garden;
Thinking of lanes and fields, and the song of the
lark and the linnet,
Seeing the village street, and familiar faces of
neighbors
Going about as of old, and stopping to gossip to-
gether,
And, at the end of the street, the village church,
with the ivy
Climbing the old gray tower, and the quiet graves
in the churchyard.

Kind are the people I live with, and dear to me my religion;
Still my heart is so sad, that I wish myself back in Old England.
You will say it is wrong, but I cannot help it: I almost
Wish myself back in Old England, I feel so lonely and wretched."

Thereupon answered the youth: "Indeed I do not condemn you;
Stouter hearts than a woman's have quailed in this terrible winter.
Yours is tender and trusting, and needs a stronger to lean on;
So I have come to you now, with an offer and proffer of marriage
Made by a good man and true, Miles Standish the Captain of Plymouth!"

Thus he delivered his message, the dexterous writer of letters,—
Did not embellish the theme, nor array it in beautiful phrases,
But came straight to the point, and blurted it out like a schoolboy;

Even the Captain himself could hardly have said
it more bluntly.
Mute with amazement and sorrow, Priscilla the
Puritan maiden
Looked into Alden's face, her eyes dilated with
wonder,
Feeling his words like a blow, that stunned her and
rendered her speechless;
Till at length she exclaimed, interrupting the
ominous silence:
"If the great Captain of Plymouth is so very eager
to wed me,
Why does he not come himself, and take the trouble
to woo me?
If I am not worth the wooing, I surely am not worth
the winning!"
Then John Alden began explaining and smoothing
the matter,
Making it worse as he went, by saying the Captain
was busy,—
Had no time for such things;—such things! the
words grating harshly
Fell on the ear of Priscilla; and swift as a flash she
made answer:
"Has he no time for such things, as you call it,
before he is married,

Would he be likely to find it, or make it, after the wedding?
That is the way with you men; you don't understand us, you cannot.
When you have made up your minds, after thinking of this one and that one,
Choosing, selecting, rejecting, comparing one with another,
Then you make known your desire, with abrupt and sudden avowal,
And are offended and hurt, and indignant perhaps, that a woman
Does not respond at once to a love that she never suspected,
Does not attain at a bound to the height to which you have been climbing.
This is not right nor just; for surely a woman's affection
Is not a thing to be asked for, and had for only the asking.
When one is truly in love, one not only says it, but shows it.
Had he but waited a while, had he only showed that he loved me,
Even this Captain of yours—who knows?—at last might have won me,

Old and rough as he is; but now it never can happen."

Still John Alden went on, unheeding the words of Priscilla,
Urging the suit of his friend, explaining, persuading, expanding;
Spoke of his courage and skill, and of all his battles in Flanders,
How with the people of God he had chosen to suffer affliction,
How, in return for his zeal, they had made him Captain of Plymouth;
He was a gentleman born, could trace his pedigree plainly
Back to Hugh Standish [1] of Duxbury Hall, in Lancashire, England,
Who was the son of Ralph, and the grandson of Thurston de Standish;
Heir unto vast estates, of which he was basely defrauded,
Still bore the family arms,[2] and had for his crest a cock argent
Combed and wattled gules, and all the rest of the blazon.
He was a man of honor, of noble and generous nature;

Though he was rough, he was kindly; she knew how during the winter
He had attended the sick, with a hand as gentle as woman's;
Somewhat hasty and hot, he could not deny it, and headstrong,
Stern as a soldier might be, but hearty, and placable always,
Not to be laughed at and scorned, because he was little of stature;
For he was great of heart, magnanimous, courtly, courageous;
Any woman in Plymouth, nay, any woman in England,
Might be happy and proud to be called the wife of Miles Standish!

But as he warmed and glowed, in his simple and eloquent language,
Quite forgetful of self, and full of the praise of his rival,
Archly the maiden smiled, and, with eyes overrunning with laughter,
Said, in a tremulous voice, "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" [1]

IV

JOHN ALDEN

Into the open air John Alden,[1] perplexed and bewildered,
Rushed like a man insane, and wandered alone by the seaside;
Paced up and down the sands, and bared his head to the east wind,
Cooling his heated brow, and the fire and fever within him.
Slowly, as out of the heavens, with apocalyptical splendors,[2]
Sank the City of God, in the vision of John the Apostle;
So, with its cloudy walls of chrysolite, jasper, and sapphire,
Sank the broad red sun, and over its turrets uplifted
Glimmered the golden reed of the angel who measured the city.

"Welcome, O wind of the East!" he exclaimed in his wild exultation,
"Welcome, O wind of the East, from the caves of the misty Atlantic!

Blowing o'er fields of dulse,[1] and measureless meadows of seagrass,
Blowing o'er rocky wastes, and the grottoes and gardens of ocean!
Lay thy cold, moist hand on my burning forehead, and wrap me
Close in thy garments of mist, to allay the fever within me!"

Like an awakened conscience, the sea was moaning and tossing,
Beating remorseful and loud the mutable sands of the seashore.
Fierce in his soul was the struggle and tumult of passions contending;
Love triumphant and crowned, and friendship wounded and bleeding,
Passionate cries of desire, and importunate pleadings of duty!
"Is it my fault," he said, "that the maiden has chosen between us?
Is it my fault that he failed,—my fault that I am the victor?"
Then within him there thundered a voice, like the voice of the Prophet:
"It hath displeased the Lord!"—and he thought of David's transgression,[2]

Bathsheba's beautiful face, and his friend in the front of the battle!
Shame and confusion of guilt, and abasement and self-condemnation,
Overwhelmed him at once; and he cried in the deepest contrition:
"It hath displeased the Lord! It is the temptation of Satan!"

Then, uplifting his head, he looked at the sea, and beheld there
Dimly the shadowy form of the Mayflower riding at anchor,
Rocked on the rising tide, and ready to sail on the morrow;
Heard the voices of men through the mist, the rattle of cordage
Thrown on the deck, the shouts of the mate, and the sailors' "Aye, aye, sir!"
Clear and distinct, but not loud, in the dripping air of the twilight.
Still for a moment he stood, and listened, and stared at the vessel,
Then went hurriedly on, as one who, seeing a phantom,
Stops, then quickens his pace, and follows the beckoning shadow.

"Yes, it is plain to me now," he murmured; "the hand of the Lord is
Leading me out of the land of darkness, the bondage of error,
Through the sea, that shall lift the walls of its waters [1] around me,
Hiding me, cutting me off, from the cruel thoughts that pursue me.
Back will I go o'er the ocean, this dreary land will abandon,
Her [2] whom I may not love, and him whom my heart has offended.
Better to be in my grave in the green old churchyard in England,
Close by my mother's side, and among the dust of my kindred;
Better be dead and forgotten, than living in shame and dishonor!
Sacred and safe and unseen, in the dark of the narrow chamber
With me my secret shall lie, like a buried jewel that glimmers
Bright on the hand that is dust, in the chambers of silence and darkness,—
Yes, as the marriage ring of the great espousal hereafter!"

Thus as he spake, he turned, in the strength of his strong resolution,
Leaving behind him the shore, and hurried along in the twilight,
Through the congenial gloom of the forest silent and somber,
Till he beheld the lights on the seven houses [1] of Plymouth,
Shining like seven stars in the dusk and mist of the evening.
Soon he entered his door, and found the redoubtable Captain
Sitting alone, and absorbed in the martial pages of Cæsar,
Fighting some great campaign in Hainault or Brabant [2] or Flanders.
"Long have you been on your errand," he said with a cheery demeanor,
Even as one who is waiting an answer, and fears not the issue.
"Not far off is the house, although the woods are between us;
But you have lingered so long, that while you were going and coming
I have fought ten battles and sacked and demolished a city.

Come, sit down, and in order relate to me all that has happened."

Then John Alden spake, and related the wondrous adventure
From beginning to end, minutely, just as it happened;
How he had seen Priscilla, and how he had sped [1] in his courtship,
Only smoothing a little, and softening down her refusal,
But when he came at length to the words Priscilla had spoken,
Words so tender and cruel: "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"
Up leaped the Captain of Plymouth, and stamped on the floor, till his armor
Clanged on the wall, where it hung, with a sound of sinister omen.
All his pent-up wrath burst forth in a sudden explosion,
E'en as a hand-grenade, that scatters destruction around it.
Wildly he shouted, and loud: "John Alden! you have betrayed me!
Me, Miles Standish, your friend! have supplanted, defrauded, betrayed me!

One of my ancestors ran his sword through the heart of Wat Tyler; [1]
Who shall prevent me from running my own through the heart of a traitor?
Yours is the greater treason, for yours is a treason to friendship!
You, who lived under my roof, whom I cherished and loved as a brother;
You, who have fed at my board, and drunk at my cup, to whose keeping
I have intrusted my honor, my thoughts the most sacred and secret,—
You too, Brutus! [2] ah, woe to the name of friendship hereafter!
Brutus was Cæsar's friend, and you were mine, but henceforward
Let there be nothing between us save war, and implacable hatred!"

So spake the Captain of Plymouth, and strode about in the chamber,
Chafing and choking with rage; like cords were the veins on his temples.
But in the midst of his anger a man appeared at the doorway,
Bringing in uttermost haste a message of urgent importance.

Rumors of danger and war and hostile incursions of Indians!
Straightway the Captain paused, and, without further question or parley,
Took from the nail on the wall his sword with its scabbard of iron,
Buckled the belt round his waist, and, frowning fiercely, departed.
Alden was left alone. [1] He heard the clank of the scabbard
Growing fainter and fainter, and dying away in the distance.
Then he arose from his seat, and looked forth into the darkness,
Felt the cool air blow on his cheek, that was hot with the insult,
Lifted his eyes to the heavens, and, folding his hands as in childhood
Prayed in the silence of night to the Father who seeth in secret. [2]

Meanwhile the choleric Captain strode wrathful away to the council,
Found it already assembled, impatiently waiting his coming;
Men in the middle of life, austere and grave in deportment,

Only one of them old, the hill [1] that was nearest to heaven,
Covered with snow, but erect, the excellent Elder of Plymouth.
God had sifted three kingdoms to find the wheat for this planting,
Then had sifted the wheat, as the living seed of a nation;
So say the chronicles old, [2] and such is the faith of the people!
Near them was standing an Indian, in attitude stern and defiant,
Naked down to the waist, and grim and ferocious in aspect;
While on the table before them was lying unopened a Bible,
Ponderous, bound in leather, brass-studded, printed in Holland,
And beside it outstretched the skin [3] of a rattlesnake glittered,
Filled, like a quiver, with arrows: a signal and challenge of warfare,
Brought by the Indian, and speaking with arrowy tongues of defiance.
This Miles Standish beheld, as he entered, and heard them debating

What were an answer befitting the hostile message and menace,
Talking of this and of that, contriving, suggesting, objecting;
One voice only for peace, and that the voice of the Elder,[1]
Judging it wise and well that some at least were converted,
Rather than any were slain, for this was but Christian behavior!
Then out spake Miles Standish, the stalwart Captain of Plymouth,
Muttering deep in his throat, for his voice was husky with anger,
"What! do you mean to make war with milk and the water of roses?
Is it to shoot red squirrels you have your howitzer planted
There on the roof of the church, or is it to shoot red devils?
Truly the only tongue that is understood by a savage
Must be the tongue of fire that speaks from the mouth of the cannon!"
Thereupon answered and said the excellent Elder of Plymouth,

Somewhat amazed and alarmed at this irreverent language:
"Not so thought Saint Paul, nor yet the other Apostles;
Not from the cannon's mouth were the tongues of fire they spake with!"
But unheeded fell this mild rebuke on the Captain,
Who had advanced to the table, and thus continued discoursing:
"Leave this matter to me, for to me by right it pertaineth.
War is a terrible trade; but in the cause that is righteous,
Sweet is the smell of powder; and thus I answer the challenge!"

Then from the rattlesnake's skin, with a sudden, contemptuous gesture,
Jerking the Indian arrows, he filled it with powder and bullets
Full to the very jaws, and handed it back to the savage,
Saying, in thundering tones: "Here, take it! this is your answer!"
Silently out of the room then glided the glistening savage,

Bearing the serpent's skin, and seeming himself
like a serpent,
Winding his sinuous way in the dark to the depths
of the forest.

V

THE SAILING OF THE MAYFLOWER

Just in the gray of the dawn, as the mists uprose
from the meadows,
There was a stir and a sound [1] in the slumbering
village of Plymouth;
Clanging and clicking of arms, and the order imper-
ative, "Forward!"
Given in tone suppressed, a tramp of feet, and then
silence.
Figures ten, in the mist, marched slowly out of the
village.
Standish the stalwart it was, with eight of his valor-
ous army,
Led by their Indian guide, by Hobomok, friend of
the white men,
Northward marching to quell the sudden revolt of
the savage.
Giants they seemed in the mist, or the mighty men
of King David; [2]

Giants in heart they were, who believed in God and the Bible,—
Aye, who believed in the smiting of Midianites and Philistines.
Over them gleamed far off the crimson banners of morning;
Under them loud on the sands, the serried [1] billows, advancing,
Fired along the line, and in regular order retreated.

Many a mile had they marched, when at length the village of Plymouth
Woke from its sleep, and arose, intent on its manifold labors.
Sweet was the air and soft; and slowly the smoke from the chimneys
Rose over roofs of thatch, and pointed steadily eastward;
Men came forth from the doors, and paused and talked of the weather,
Said that the wind had changed, and was blowing fair for the Mayflower;
Talked of their Captain's departure, and all the dangers that menaced,
He being gone, the town, and what should be done in his absence.

Merrily sang the birds, and the tender voices of women
Consecrated with hymns the common cares of the household.
Out of the sea rose the sun, and the billows rejoiced at his coming;
Beautiful were his feet [1] on the purple tops of the mountains;
Beautiful on the sails of the Mayflower riding at anchor,
Battered and blackened and worn by all the storms of the winter.
Loosely against her masts was hanging and flapping her canvas,
Rent by so many gales, and patched by the hands of the sailors.
Suddenly from her side, as the sun rose over the ocean,
Darted a puff of smoke, and floated seaward; anon rang
Loud over field and forest the cannon's roar, and the echoes
Heard and repeated the sound, the signal-gun of departure!
Ah! but with louder echoes replied the hearts of the people!

Meekly, in voices subdued, the chapter was read
from the Bible,
Meekly the prayer was begun, but ended in fervent
entreaty!
Then from their houses in haste came forth the
Pilgrims of Plymouth,
Men and women and children, all hurrying down
to the seashore,
Eager, with tearful eyes, to say farewell to the
Mayflower,
Homeward bound o'er the sea, and leaving them
here in the desert.[1]

Foremost among them was Alden. All night he
had lain without slumber,
Turning and tossing about in the heat and unrest
of his fever.
He had beheld Miles Standish, who came back late
from the council,
Stalking into the room, and heard him mutter and
murmur,
Sometimes it seemed a prayer, and sometimes it
sounded like swearing.
Once he had come to the bed, and stood there a
moment in silence;
Then he had turned away, and said: "I will not
awake him;

Let him sleep on, it is best; for what is the use of more talking!"
Then he extinguished the light, and threw himself down on his pallet,
Dressed as he was, and ready to start at the break of the morning,—
Covered himself with the cloak he had worn in his campaigns in Flanders,—
Slept as a soldier sleeps in his bivouac, ready for action.
But with the dawn he arose; in the twilight Alden beheld him
Put on his corselet of steel, and all the rest of his armor,
Buckle about his waist his trusty blade of Damascus,
Take from the corner his musket, and so stride out of the chamber.
Often the heart of the youth had burned and yearned to embrace him,
Often his lips had essayed to speak, imploring for pardon;
All the old friendship came back with its tender and grateful emotions;
But his pride overmastered the nobler nature within him,—

Pride, and the sense of his wrong, and the burning
fire of the insult.
So he beheld his friend departing in anger, but
spake not,
Saw him go forth to danger, perhaps to death, and
he spake [1] not!
Then he arose from his bed, and heard what the
people were saying,
Joined in the talk at the door, with Stephen and
Richard and Gilbert,[2]
Joined in the morning prayer, and in the reading
of Scripture,
And, with the others, in haste went hurrying down
to the seashore,
Down to the Plymouth Rock,[3] that had been to
their feet as a doorstep
Into a world unknown,—the corner stone of a
nation!

There with his boat was the Master,[4] already a
little impatient
Lest he should lose the tide, or the wind might
shift to the eastward,
Square-built, hearty, and strong, with an odor of
ocean about him,
Speaking with this one and that, and cramming
letters and parcels

Into his pockets capacious, and messages mingled together
Into his narrow brain, till at last he was wholly bewildered.
Nearer the boat stood Alden, with one foot placed on the gunwale,[1]
One still firm on the rock, and talking at times with the sailors,
Seated erect on the thwarts, all ready and eager for starting.
He too was eager to go, and thus put an end to his anguish,
Thinking to fly from despair, that swifter than keel is or canvas,
Thinking to drown in the sea the ghost that would rise and pursue him.
But as he gazed on the crowd, he beheld the form of Priscilla
Standing dejected among them, unconscious of all that was passing.
Fixed were her eyes upon his, as if she divined his intention,
Fixed with a look so sad, so reproachful, imploring, and patient,
That with a sudden revulsion his heart recoiled from its purpose,

As from the verge of a crag, where one step more is destruction.
Strange is the heart of man, with its quick, mysterious instincts!
Strange is the life of man, and fatal or fated are moments,
Whereupon turn, as on hinges, the gates of the wall adamantine!
"Here I remain!" [1] he exclaimed, as he looked at the heavens above him,
Thanking the Lord whose breath had scattered the mist and the madness,
Wherein, blind and lost, to death he was staggering headlong.
"Yonder snow-white cloud, that floats in the ether above me,
Seems like a hand that is pointing and beckoning over the ocean.
There is another hand, that is not so spectral and ghost-like,
Holding me, drawing me back, and clasping mine for protection.
Float, O hand of cloud, and vanish away in the ether!
Roll thyself up like a fist, to threaten and daunt me; I heed not

Either your warning or menace, or any omen of evil!
There is no land so sacred, no air so pure and so wholesome,
As is the air she breathes, and the soil that is pressed by her footsteps.
Here for her sake will I stay, and like an invisible presence
Hover around her forever, protecting, supporting her weakness;
Yes! as my foot was the first that stepped on this rock at the landing,
So, with the blessing of God, shall it be the last at the leaving!"

Meanwhile the Master alert, but with dignified air and important,
Scanning with watchful eye the tide and the wind and the weather,
Walked about on the sands, and the people crowded around him
Saying a few last words, and enforcing his careful remembrance.
Then, taking each by the hand, as if he were grasping a tiller,
Into the boat he sprang, and in haste shoved off to his vessel.

Glad in his heart to get rid of all this worry and flurry,
Glad to be gone from a land of sand and sickness and sorrow,
Short allowance of victual, and plenty of nothing but Gospel!
Lost in the sound of oars was the last farewell of the Pilgrims.
O strong hearts and true! not one went back in the Mayflower!
No, not one looked back, who had set his hand [1] to this plowing!

Soon were heard on board the shouts and songs of the sailors
Heaving the windlass round, and hoisting the ponderous anchor.
Then the yards were braced, and all sails set to the west wind,
Blowing steady and strong; and the Mayflower sailed from the harbor,
Rounded the point of the Gurnet,[2] and leaving far to the southward
Island and cape of sand, and the Field of the First Encounter,[3]
Took the wind on her quarter, and stood for the open Atlantic,

Borne on the send of the sea, and the swelling hearts of the Pilgrims.

Long in silence they watched the receding sail of the vessel,
Much endeared to them all, as something living and human;
Then, as if filled with the spirit, and wrapt in a vision prophetic,
Baring his hoary head, the excellent Elder of Plymouth
Said, "Let us pray!" and they prayed, and thanked the Lord and took courage.[1]
Mournfully sobbed the waves at the base of the rock, and above them
Bowed and whispered the wheat on the hill of death, and their kindred
Seemed to awake in their graves, and to join in the prayer that they uttered.
Sun-illumined and white, on the eastern verge of the ocean
Gleamed the departing sail, like a marble slab in a graveyard;
Buried beneath it lay forever all hope of escaping.
Lo! as they turned to depart, they saw the form of an Indian,

Watching them from the hill; but while they spake with each other,
Pointing with outstretched hands, and saying, "Look!" he had vanished.
So they returned to their homes; but Alden lingered a little,
Musing alone on the shore, and watching the wash of the billows
Round the base of the rock, and the sparkle and flash of the sunshine,
Like the spirit of God,[1] moving visibly over the waters.

VI

PRISCILLA

Thus for a while he stood, and mused by the shore of the ocean,
Thinking of many things, and most of all of Priscilla;
And as if thought had the power to draw to itself, like the loadstone,
Whatsoever it touches, by subtle laws of its nature,
Lo! as he turned to depart, Priscilla was standing beside him.

From the painting by G.H. Boughton

The Return of the Mayflower

"Are you so much offended, you will not speak to me?" said she.
"Am I so much to blame, that yesterday, when you were pleading
Warmly the cause of another, my heart, impulsive and wayward,
Pleaded your own, and spake out, forgetful perhaps of decorum?
Certainly you can forgive me for speaking so frankly, for saying
What I ought not to have said, yet now I can never unsay it;
For there are moments in life, when the heart is so full of emotion,
That if by chance it be shaken, or into its depths like a pebble
Drops some careless word, it overflows, and its secret,
Spilt on the ground like water, can never be gathered together.
Yesterday I was shocked, when I heard you speak of Miles Standish,
Praising his virtues, transforming his very defects into virtues,
Praising his courage and strength, and even his fighting in Flanders,

As if by fighting alone you could win the heart of a woman,
Quite overlooking yourself and the rest, in exalting your hero.
Therefore I spake as I did, by an irresistible impulse.
You will forgive me, I hope, for the sake of the friendship between us,
Which is too true and too sacred to be so easily broken!"
Thereupon answered John Alden, the scholar, the friend of Miles Standish:
"I was not angry with you, with myself alone I was angry,
Seeing how badly I managed the matter I had in my keeping."
"No!"[1] interrupted the maiden, with answer prompt and decisive;
"No; you were angry with me, for speaking so frankly and freely.
It was wrong, I acknowledge; for it is the fate of a woman
Long to be patient and silent, to wait like a ghost that is speechless,
Till some questioning voice dissolves the spell of its silence.
Hence is the inner life of so many suffering women

Sunless and silent and deep, like subterranean rivers
Running through caverns of darkness, unheard, unseen, and unfruitful,
Chafing their channels of stone, with endless and profitless murmurs."
Thereupon answered John Alden, the young man, the lover of women:
"Heaven forbid it, Priscilla; and truly they seem to me always
More like the beautiful rivers[1] that watered the garden of Eden,
More like the river Euphrates, through deserts of Havilah flowing,
Filling the land with delight, and memories sweet of the garden!"
"Ah, by these words, I can see," again interrupted the maiden,
"How very little you prize me, or care for what I am saying.
When from the depths of my heart, in pain and with secret misgiving,
Frankly I speak to you, asking for sympathy only and kindness,
Straightway you take up my words, that are plain and direct and in earnest,

Turn them away from their meaning, and answer with flattering phrases.
This is not right, is not just, is not true to the best that is in you;
For I know and esteem you, and feel that your nature is noble,
Lifting mine up to a higher, a more ethereal level.
Therefore I value your friendship, and feel it perhaps the more keenly
If you say aught that implies I am only as one among many,
If you make use of those common and complimentary phrases
Most men think so fine, in dealing and speaking with women,
But which women reject as insipid, if not as insulting."

Mute and amazed was Alden; and listened and looked at Priscilla,
Thinking he never had seen her more fair, more divine in her beauty.
He who but yesterday pleaded so glibly the cause of another,
Stood there embarrassed and silent, and seeking in vain for an answer.

So the maiden went on, and little divined or imagined
What was at work in his heart, that made him so awkward and speechless.
"Let us, then, be what we are, speak what we think, and in all things
Keep ourselves loyal to truth, and the sacred professions of friendship.
It is no secret I tell you, nor am I ashamed to declare it:
I have liked to be with you, to see you, to speak with you always.
So I was hurt at your words, and a little affronted to hear you
Urge me to marry your friend, though he were the Captain Miles Standish.
For I must tell you the truth: much more to me is your friendship
Than all the love he could give, were he twice the hero you think him."
Then she extended her hand, and Alden, who eagerly grasped it,
Felt all the wounds in his heart, that were aching and bleeding so sorely,
Healed by the touch of that hand, and he said, with a voice full of feeling:

"Yes, we must ever be friends; and of all who offer you friendship
Let me be e'er the first, the truest, the nearest and dearest!"

Casting a farewell look at the glimmering sail of the Mayflower
Distant, but still in sight, and sinking below the horizon,
Homeward together they walked, with a strange, indefinite feeling,
That all the rest had departed and left them alone in the desert.
But, as they went through the fields in the blessing and smile of the sunshine,
Lighter grew their hearts, and Priscilla said very archly:
"Now that our terrible Captain has gone in pursuit of the Indians,
Where he is happier far than he would be commanding a household,
You may speak boldly, and tell me of all that happened between you,
When you returned last night, and said how ungrateful you found me."
Thereupon answered John Alden, and told her the whole of the story,—

Told her his own despair, and the direful wrath [1] of
Miles Standish.
Whereat the maiden smiled, and said between
laughing and earnest,
"He is a little chimney, and heated hot in a mo-
ment!"
But as he gently rebuked her, and told her how
much he had suffered,—
How he had even determined to sail that day in the
Mayflower,
And remained for her sake, on hearing the dangers
that threatened,—
All her manner was changed,[2] and she said with a
faltering accent,
"Truly I thank you for this: how good you have
been to me always!"

Thus, as a pilgrim devout, who toward Jerusalem
journeys,
Taking three steps in advance, and one reluctantly
backward,
Urged by importunate zeal, and withheld by pangs
of contrition;
Slowly but steadily onward, receding yet ever
advancing,
Journeyed this Puritan youth to the Holy Land [3]
of his longings,

Urged by the fervor of love, and withheld by remorseful misgivings.

VII

THE MARCH OF MILES STANDISH

Meanwhile the stalwart Miles Standish was marching steadily northward,
Winding through forest and swamp, and along the trend of the seashore,
All day long, with hardly a halt, the fire of his anger
Burning and crackling within, and the sulphurous odor of powder
Seeming more sweet to his nostrils than all the scents of the forest.
Silent and moody he went, and much he revolved his discomfort;
He who was used to success, and to easy victories always,
Thus to be flouted, rejected, and laughed to scorn by a maiden,
Thus to be mocked and betrayed by the friend whom most he had trusted!
Ah! 'twas too much to be borne, and he fretted and chafed in his armor!

"I alone am to blame," he muttered, "for mine was the folly.
What has a rough old soldier, grown grim and gray in the harness,
Used to the camp and its ways, to do with the wooing of maidens?
'Twas but a dream,—let it pass,—let it vanish like so many others!
What I thought was a flower, is only a weed, and is worthless;
Out of my heart will I pluck it, and throw it away, and henceforward
Be but a fighter of battles, a lover and wooer of dangers!"
Thus he revolved in his mind his sorry defeat and discomfort,
While he was marching by day or lying at night in the forest,
Looking up at the trees and the constellations beyond them.

After a three days' march he came to an Indian encampment
Pitched on the edge of a meadow, between the sea and the forest;
Women at work by the tents, and the warriors, horrid with warpaint,

Seated about a fire, and smoking and talking together;
Who, when they saw from afar the sudden approach of the white men,
Saw the flash of the sun on breastplate and saber and musket,
Straightway leaped to their feet, and two, from among them advancing,
Came to parley with Standish, and offer him furs as a present;
Friendship was [1] in their looks, but in their hearts there was hatred.
Braves of the tribe were these, and brothers, gigantic in stature,
Huge as Goliath of Gath, or the terrible Og,[2] king of Bashan;
One was Pecksuot named, and the other was called Wattawamat.
Round their necks were suspended their knives in scabbards of wampum,[3]
Two-edged, trenchant knives, with points as sharp as a needle.
Other arms had they none, for they were cunning and crafty.
"Welcome, English!" they said,—these words they had learned from the traders

Touching at times on the coast, to barter and chaffer for peltries.
Then in their native tongue they began to parley with Standish,
Through his guide and interpreter, Hobomok, friend of the white man,
Begging for blankets and knives, but mostly for muskets and powder,
Kept by the white man, they said, concealed, with the plague, in his cellars,
Ready to be let loose, and destroy his brother the red man!
But when Standish refused, and said he would give them the Bible,
Suddenly changing their tone, they began to boast and to bluster.
Then Wattawamat [1] advanced with a stride in front of the other,
And, with a lofty demeanor, thus vauntingly spake to the Captain:
"Now Wattawamat can see, by the fiery eyes of the Captain,
Angry is he in his heart; but the heart of the brave Wattawamat
Is not afraid at the sight. He was not born of a woman,

But on a mountain, at night, from an oak-tree riven by lightning,
Forth he sprang at a bound, with all his weapons about him,
Shouting, 'Who is there here to fight with the brave Wattawamat?' "
Then he unsheathed his knife, and, whetting the blade on his left hand,
Held it aloft and displayed a woman's face on the handle,
Saying, with bitter expression and look of sinister meaning:
"I have another at home, with the face of a man on the handle;
By and by they shall marry; and there will be plenty of children!"

Then stood Pecksuot forth, self-vaunting, insulting Miles Standish;
While with his fingers he patted the knife that hung at his bosom,
Drawing it half from its sheath, and plunging it back, as he muttered,
"By and by it shall see; it shall eat; ah, ha! but shall speak not!
This is the mighty Captain the white men have sent to destroy us!

He is a little man; let him go and work with the women!"

Meanwhile Standish had noted the faces and figures of Indians
Peeping and creeping about from bush to tree in the forest,
Feigning to look for game, with arrows set on their bow-strings,
Drawing about him still closer and closer the net of their ambush.
But undaunted he stood, and dissembled and treated them smoothly;
So the old chronicles say, that were writ in the days of the fathers.
But when he heard their defiance, the boast, the taunt, and the insult,
All the hot blood of his race, of Sir Hugh and of Thurston de Standish,
Boiled and beat in his heart, and swelled in the veins of his temples.
Headlong he leaped on the boaster,[1] and, snatching his knife from its scabbard,
Plunged it into his heart, and reeling backward, the savage
Fell with his face to the sky, and a fiendlike fierceness upon it.

Straight there arose from the forest the awful sound of the war-whoop,
And, like a flurry of snow on the whistling wind of December,
Swift and sudden and keen came a flight of feathery arrows.
Then came a cloud of smoke, and out of the cloud came the lightning,
Out of the lightning thunder;[1] and death unseen ran before it.
Frightened, the savages fled for shelter in swamp and in thicket,
Hotly pursued and beset; but their sachem, the brave Wattawamat,
Fled not; he was dead. Unswerving and swift had a bullet
Passed through his brain, and he fell with both hands clutching the greensward,
Seeming in death to hold back from the foe the land of his fathers.

There on the flowers of the meadow the warriors lay, and above them
Silent, with folded arms, stood Hobomok,[2] friend of the white man.
Smiling at length he exclaimed to the stalwart Captain of Plymouth:

"Pecksuot bragged very loud, of his courage, his strength, and his stature,—
Mocked the great Captain, and called him a little man; but I see now
Big enough have you been to lay him speechless before you!"

Thus the first battle was fought and won by the stalwart Miles Standish.
When the tidings thereof were brought to the village of Plymouth,
And as a trophy of war the head of the brave Wattawamat
Scowled from the roof of the fort, which at once was a church and a fortress,
All who beheld it rejoiced, and praised the Lord, and took courage.
Only Priscilla averted her face from this specter of terror,
Thanking God in her heart that she had not married Miles Standish;
Shrinking, fearing almost, lest, coming home from his battles,
He should lay claim to her hand, as the prize and reward of his valor.

VIII

THE SPINNING WHEEL

Month after month passed away, and in autumn the ships of the merchants
Came [1] with kindreds and friends, with cattle and corn for the Pilgrims.
All in the village was peace; the men were intent on their labors,
Busy with hewing and building, with garden plot and with merestead,
Busy with breaking the glebe, and mowing the grass in the meadows,
Searching the sea for its fish, and hunting the deer in the forest.
All in the village was peace; but at times the rumor of warfare
Filled the air with alarm, and the apprehension of danger.
Bravely the stalwart Miles Standish was scouring the land with his forces,
Waxing valiant in fight [2] and defeating the alien armies,
Till his name had become a sound of fear to the nations.

Anger was still in his heart, but at times the remorse and contrition
Which in all noble natures succeed the passionate outbreak,
Came like a rising tide, that encounters the rush of a river,
Staying its current a while, but making it bitter and brackish.

Meanwhile Alden at home had built him a new habitation,
Solid, substantial, of timber rough-hewn from the firs of the forest.
Wooden-barred was the door, and the roof was covered with rushes;
Latticed the windows were, and the window-panes were of paper,
Oiled to admit the light, while wind and rain were excluded.
There too he dug a well, and around it planted an orchard:
Still may be seen to this day [1] some trace of the well and the orchard.
Close to the house was the stall, where, safe and secure from annoyance,
Raghorn, the snow-white bull, that had fallen to Alden's allotment

In the division of cattle, might ruminate in the night-time
Over the pastures he cropped, made fragrant by sweet pennyroyal.

Oft when his labor was finished, with eager feet would the dreamer
Follow the pathway that ran through the woods to the house of Priscilla,
Led by illusions romantic and subtle deceptions of fancy,
Pleasure disguised as duty, and love in the semblance of friendship.
Ever of her he thought, when he fashioned the walls of his dwelling;
Ever of her he thought, when he delved in the soil of his garden;
Ever of her he thought, when he read in his Bible on Sunday
Praise of the virtuous woman, as she is described in the Proverbs,[1]—
How the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her always,
How all the days of her life she will do him good, and not evil,
How she seeketh the wool and the flax and worketh with gladness,

How she layeth her hand to the spindle and holdeth
the distaff,
How she is not afraid of the snow for herself or her
household,
Knowing her household are clothed with the scarlet
cloth of her weaving!

So as she sat at her wheel one afternoon in the
autumn,
Alden, who opposite sat, and was watching her
dexterous fingers,
As if the thread she was spinning were that of his
life and his fortune,
After a pause in their talk, thus spake to the sound
of the spindle:
"Truly, Priscilla," he said, "when I see you spin-
ning and spinning,
Never idle a moment, but thrifty and thoughtful of
others,
Suddenly you are transformed, are visibly changed
in a moment;
You are no longer Priscilla, but Bertha the Beauti-
ful Spinner."
Here the light foot on the treadle grew swifter and
swifter; the spindle
Uttered an angry snarl, and the thread snapped
short in her fingers;

While the impetuous speaker, not heeding the mischief, continued:
"You are the beautiful Bertha, the spinner, the queen of Helvetia;[1]
She whose story I read at a stall in the streets of Southampton,
Who, as she rode on her palfrey, o'er valley and meadow and mountain,
Ever was spinning her thread from a distaff fixed to her saddle.
She was so thrifty and good, that her name passed into a proverb.
So shall it be with your own, when the spinning wheel shall no longer
Hum in the house of the farmer, and fill its chambers with music.
Then shall the mothers, reproving, relate how it was in their childhood,
Praising the good old times, and the days of Priscilla the spinner!"
Straight uprose from her wheel the beautiful Puritan maiden,
Pleased with the praise of her thrift from him whose praise was the sweetest,
Drew from the reel on the table a snowy skein of her spinning,

Thus making answer, meanwhile, to the flattering phrases of Alden:

"Come, you must not be idle; if I am a pattern for housewives,

Show yourself equally worthy of being the model of husbands.

Hold this skein on your hands, while I wind it, ready for knitting;

Then who knows but hereafter, when fashions have changed and the manners,

Fathers may talk to their sons of the good old times of John Alden!"

Thus, with a jest and a laugh, the skein on his hands she adjusted,

He sitting awkwardly there, with his arms extended before him,

She standing graceful, erect, and winding the thread from his fingers,

Sometimes chiding a little his clumsy manner of holding,

Sometimes touching his hands, as she disentangled expertly

Twist or knot in the yarn, unawares—for how could she help it?—

Sending electrical thrills through every nerve in his body.

Lo! in the midst of this scene, a breathless messenger entered,
Bringing in hurry and heat the terrible news from the village.
Yes; Miles Standish was dead!—an Indian had brought them the tidings,—
Slain by a poisoned arrow, shot down in the front of the battle,
Into an ambush beguiled, cut off with the whole of his forces;
All the town would be burned, and all the people be murdered!
Such were the tidings of evil that burst on the hearts of the hearers.
Silent and statue-like stood Priscilla, her face looking backward
Still at the face of the speaker, her arms uplifted in horror;
But John Alden, upstarting, as if the barb of the arrow
Piercing the heart of his friend had struck his own, and had sundered
Once and forever the bonds that held him bound as a captive,
Wild with excess of sensation, the awful delight of his freedom,

Mingled with pain and regret, unconscious of what
he was doing,
Clasped, almost with a groan, the motionless form
of Priscilla,
Pressing her close to his heart, as forever his own,
and exclaiming:
"Those whom the Lord hath united, let no man
put them asunder!" [1]

Even as rivulets twain, from distant and sep-
arate sources,
Seeing each other afar, as they leap from the rocks,
and pursuing
Each one its devious path, but drawing nearer and
nearer,
Rush together at last, at their trysting-place in the
forest;
So these lives that had run thus far in separate
channels,
Coming in sight of each other, then swerving and
flowing asunder,
Parted by barriers strong, but drawing nearer and
nearer,
Rushed together at last, and one was lost in the
other.

IX

THE WEDDING-DAY

Forth from the curtain of clouds, from the tent of purple and scarlet,
Issued the sun,[1] the great High-Priest, in his garments resplendent,
Holiness unto the Lord, in letters of light, on his forehead,
Round the hem of his robe the golden bells and pomegranates.
Blessing the world he came, and the bars of vapor beneath him
Gleamed like a grate of brass, and the sea at his feet was a laver!

This was the wedding morn of Priscilla the Puritan maiden.
Friends were assembled together; the Elder and Magistrate also
Graced the scene with their presence, and stood like the Law and the Gospel,
One with the sanction of earth and one with the blessing of heaven.
Simple and brief was the wedding, as that of Ruth and of Boaz.[2]

Softly the youth and the maiden repeated the words of betrothal,
Taking each other for husband and wife in the Magistrate's presence,
After the Puritan way, and the laudable custom of Holland.[1]
Fervently then and devoutly, the excellent Elder of Plymouth
Prayed for the hearth and the home, that were founded that day in affection,
Speaking of life and of death, and imploring Divine benedictions.

Lo! when the service was ended, a form appeared on the threshold,
Clad in armor of steel, a somber and sorrowful figure!
Why does the bridegroom start and stare at the strange apparition?
Why does the bride turn pale, and hide her face on his shoulder?
Is it a phantom of air,—a bodiless, spectral illusion?
Is it a ghost from the grave, that has come to forbid the betrothal?
Long had it stood there unseen, a guest uninvited, unwelcomed;

Over its clouded eyes there had passed at times an expression
Softening the gloom and revealing the warm heart hidden beneath them,
As when across the sky the driving rack [1] of the rain cloud
Grows for a moment thin, and betrays the sun by its brightness.
Once it had lifted its hand, and moved its lips, but was silent,
As if an iron will had mastered the fleeting intention.
But when were ended the troth and the prayer and the last benediction,
Into the room it strode, and the people beheld with amazement
Bodily there in his armor Miles Standish, the Captain of Plymouth!
Grasping the bridegroom's hand, he said with emotion, "Forgive me!
I have been angry and hurt,—too long have I cherished the feeling;
I have been cruel and hard, but now, thank God! it is ended.
Mine is the same hot blood that leaped in the veins of Hugh Standish,

Sensitive, swift to resent, but as swift in atoning for error.
Never so much as now was Miles Standish the friend of John Alden."
Thereupon answered the bridegroom: "Let all be forgotten between us,—
All save the dear old friendship, and that shall grow older and dearer!"
Then the Captain advanced, and, bowing, saluted Priscilla,
Gravely, and after the manner of old-fashioned gentry in England,
Something of camp and court, of town and of country, commingled,
Wishing her joy of her wedding, and loudly lauding her husband.
Then he said with a smile: "I should have remembered the adage,—
If you would be well served, you must serve yourself, and, moreover,
No man can gather cherries in Kent [1] at the season of Christmas!"

Great was the people's amazement, and greater yet their rejoicing,
Thus to behold once more the sunburnt face of their Captain,

Whom they had mourned as dead; and they gathered and crowded about him,
Eager to see him and hear him, forgetful of bride and of bridegroom,
Questioning, answering, laughing, and each interrupting the other,
Till the good Captain declared, being quite overpowered and bewildered,
He had rather by far break into an Indian encampment,
Than come again to a wedding to which he had not been invited.

Meanwhile the bridegroom went forth and stood with the bride at the doorway,
Breathing the perfumed air of that warm and beautiful morning.
Touched with autumnal tints, but lonely and sad in the sunshine,
Lay extended before them the land of toil and privation;
There were the graves of the dead, and the barren waste of the seashore,
There the familiar fields, the groves of pine, and the meadows;
But to their eyes transfigured, it seemed as the Garden of Eden,

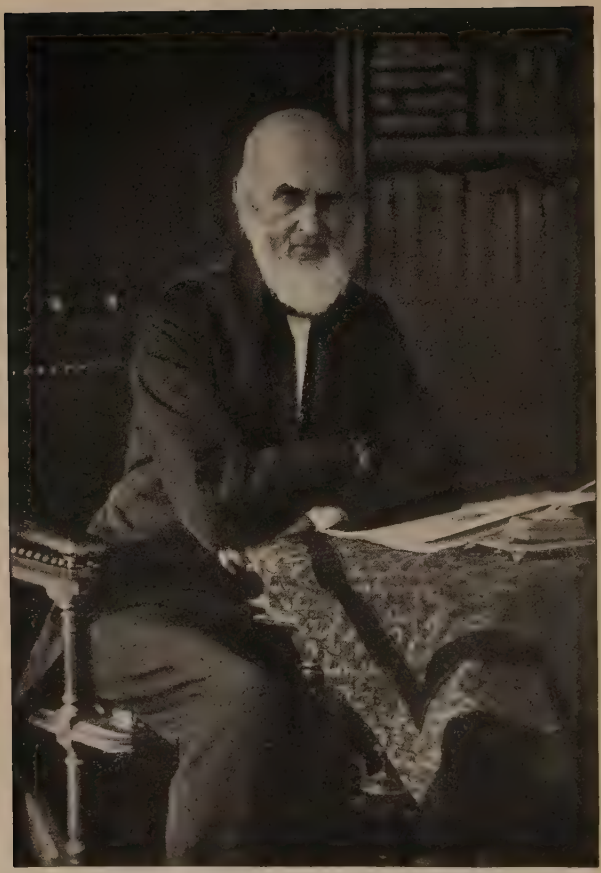
Filled with the presence of God, whose voice was the sound of the ocean.

Soon was their vision disturbed by the noise and stir of departure,
Friends coming forth from the house, and impatient of longer delaying,
Each with his plan for the day, and the work that was left uncompleted.
Then from a stall near at hand, amid exclamations of wonder,
Alden, the thoughtful, the careful, so happy, so proud of Priscilla,
Brought out his snow-white bull, obeying the hand of its master,
Led by a cord that was tied to an iron ring in its nostrils,
Covered with crimson cloth, and a cushion placed for a saddle.
She should not walk, he said, through the dust and heat of the noonday;
Nay, she should ride like a queen, not plod along like a peasant.
Somewhat alarmed at first, but reassured by the others,
Placing her hand on the cushion, her foot in the hand of her husband,

Gayly, with joyous laugh, Priscilla mounted her palfrey.
"Nothing is wanting now," he said with a smile, "but the distaff;
Then you would be in truth my queen, my beautiful Bertha!"

Onward the bridal procession now moved to their new habitation,
Happy husband and wife, and friends conversing together.
Pleasantly murmured the brook, as they crossed the ford in the forest,
Pleased with the image [1] that passed, like a dream of love through its bosom,
Tremulous, floating in air, o'er the depths of the azure abysses.
Down through the golden leaves the sun was pouring his splendors,
Gleaming on purple grapes, that, from branches above them suspended,
Mingled their odorous breath with the balm of the pine and the fir-tree,
Wild and sweet as the clusters that grew in the valley of Eshcol.[2]
Like a picture it seemed of the primitive, pastoral ages,

Fresh with the youth of the world, and recalling
Rebecca and Isaac,[1]
Old and yet ever new,[2] and simple and beautiful
always,
Love immortal and young in the endless succession
of lovers.
So through the Plymouth woods passed onward the
bridal procession.



JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

My Favorite

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

SNOW-BOUND

A WINTER IDYL[1]

TO THE MEMORY OF THE HOUSEHOLD IT DESCRIBES

THIS POEM IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR

"As the Spirits of Darkness be stronger in the dark, so good Spirits which be Angels of Light are augmented not only by the Divine light of the Sun, but also by our common Wood Fire: and as the Celestial Fire drives away dark spirits, so also this our Fire of Wood doth the same." — COR. AGRIPPA, *Occult Philosophy*,[2] Book I. ch. v.

"Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow; and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight; the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, inclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm."

EMERSON, *The Snow-Storm*.

The sun that brief December day[3]
Rose cheerless over hills of gray,
And, darkly circled, gave at noon
A sadder light than waning moon.
Slow tracing down the thickening sky

·Its mute and ominous prophecy,
·A portent seeming less than threat,
·It sank from sight before it set.
·A chill no coat, however stout,
·Of homespun stuff [1] could quite shut out,
·A hard, dull bitterness of cold,
·That checked, mid-vein, the circling race
·Of life-blood in the sharpened face,
·The coming [2] of the snow-storm told.
·The wind blew east; we heard the roar [3]
·Of Ocean on his wintry shore,
·And felt the strong pulse throbbing there
·Beat with low rhythm our inland air.

·Meanwhile we did our nightly chores,—
·Brought in the wood from out of doors,
·Littered the stalls, and from the mows
·Raked down the herd's-grass for the cows:
·Heard the horse whinnying for his corn;
·And, sharply clashing horn on horn,
·Impatient down the stanchion [4] rows
·The cattle shake their walnut bows;
·While, peering from his early perch
·Upon the scaffold's pole of birch,
·The cock his crested [5] helmet bent
·And down his querulous [6] challenge sent.

Unwarmed by any sunset light
The gray day darkened into night,
A night made hoary with the swarm
And whirl-dance of the blinding storm,
As zigzag wavering to and fro
Crossed and recrossed the wingèd snow:
And ere the early bedtime came
The white drift piled the window-frame,
And through the glass the clothes-line posts
Looked in like tall and sheeted ghosts.[1]
So all night long the storm roared on:
The morning broke without a sun;
In tiny spherule[2] traced with lines
Of Nature's geometric signs,
In starry flake and pellicle
All day the hoary meteor fell;
And, when the second morning shone,
We looked upon a world unknown,
On nothing we could call our own.
Around the glistening wonder bent
The blue walls of the firmament,
No cloud above, no earth below, —
A universe of sky and snow!
The old familiar sights of ours
Took marvelous shapes; strange domes and towers
Rose up where sty or corn-crib stood,

'Or garden-wall or belt of wood;
'A smooth white mound [1] the brush-pile showed,
'A fenceless drift what once was road;
'The bridle-post an old man sat
'With loose-flung coat and high cocked hat;
'The well-curb had a Chinese roof;
'And even the long sweep, high aloof,
'In its slant splendor, seemed to tell
'Of Pisa's leaning miracle.[2]

A prompt, decisive man, no breath
Our father [3] wasted: "Boys, a path!"
Well pleased (for when did farmer boy
Count such a summons less than joy?)
Our buskins [4] on our feet we drew;
With mittened hands, and caps drawn low,
To guard our necks and ears from snow,
We cut the solid whiteness through;
And, where the drift was deepest, made
A tunnel walled and overlaid
With dazzling crystal: we had read
Of rare Aladdin's wondrous cave,[5]
And to our own his name we gave,
With many a wish the luck were ours
To test his lamp's supernal powers.
We reached the barn with merry din,

And roused the prisoned brutes within.
The old horse thrust his long head out,
And grave with wonder gazed about;
The cock his lusty greeting said,
And forth his speckled harem led;
The oxen lashed their tails, and hooked,
And mild reproach of hunger looked;
The hornèd patriarch of the sheep,
Like Egypt's Amun [1] roused from sleep,
Shook his sage head with gesture mute,
And emphasized with stamp of foot.

All day the gusty north-wind bore
The loosened drift its breath before;
Low circling round its southern zone,
The sun through dazzling snow-mist shone.
No church-bell [2] lent its Christian tone
To the savage air, no social smoke
Curled over woods of snow-hung oak.
A solitude [3] made more intense
By dreary-voicèd elements,
The shrieking of the mindless wind,
The moaning tree-boughs swaying blind,
And on the glass the unmeaning beat
Of ghostly finger-tips of sleet.
Beyond the circle of our hearth

No welcome sound of toil or mirth
Unbound the spell, and testified
Of human life and thought outside.
We minded [1] that the sharpest ear
The buried brooklet [2] could not hear,
The music of whose liquid lip
Had been to us companionship,
And, in our lonely life, had grown
To have an almost human tone.

As night drew on, and, from the crest
Of wooded knolls [3] that ridged the west,
The sun, a snow-blown traveler, sank
From sight beneath the smothering bank,
We piled with care our nightly stack
Of wood against the chimney-back, —
The oaken log, green, huge, and thick,
And on its top the stout back-stick;
The knotty forestick laid apart,
And filled between with curious art
The ragged brush; then, hovering near,
We watched the first red blaze appear,
Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam
On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,
Until the old, rude-furnished room
Burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom;

While radiant with a mimic flame
Outside the sparkling drift became,
And through the bare-boughed lilac-tree
Our own warm hearth seemed blazing free.
The crane and pendent trammels [1] showed,
The Turk's heads on the andirons [2] glowed;
While childish fancy, prompt to tell
The meaning of the miracle,
Whispered the old rhyme: "*Under the tree,*
When fire outdoors burns merrily,
There the witches are making tea."

The moon above the eastern wood
Shone at its full; the hill-range stood
Transfigured in the silver flood,
Its blown snows flashing cold and keen,
Dead white, save where some sharp ravine
Took shadow, or the somber green
Of hemlocks turned to pitchy black
Against the whiteness of their back.
For such a world and such a night
Most fitting that unwarming light,
Which only seemed where'er it fell
To make the coldness visible.

Shut in from all the world without,

We sat the clean-winged hearth [1] about,
Content to let the north-wind roar
In baffled rage at pane and door,
While the red logs before us beat
The frost-line [2] back with tropic heat;
And ever, when a louder blast
Shook beam and rafter as it passed,
The merrier up its roaring draught
The great throat of the chimney laughed;
The house-dog on his paws outspread
Laid to the fire his drowsy head,
The cat's dark silhouette [3] on the wall
A couchant tiger's seemed to fall;
And, for the winter fireside meet,[4]
Between the andirons' straddling feet,
The mug of cider simmered slow,
The apples sputtered in a row,
And, close at hand, the basket stood
With nuts from brown October's[5] wood.

What matter how the night behaved?
What matter how the north-wind raved?
Blow high, blow low, not all its snow
Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow.
O Time and Change! — with hair as gray
As was my sire's that winter day,

How strange it seems, with so much gone
Of life and love, to still live on!
Ah, brother! only I and thou [1]
Are left of all that circle now, —
The dear home faces whereupon
That fitful firelight paled and shone.
Henceforward, listen as we will,
The voices of that hearth are still; [2]
Look where we may, the wide earth o'er,
Those lighted faces smile no more.
We tread the paths their feet have worn,
We sit beneath their orchard trees,
We hear, like them, the hum of bees
And rustle of the bladed corn;
We turn the pages that they read,
Their written words we linger o'er,
But in the sun they cast no shade,
No voice is heard, no sign is made,
No step is on the conscious floor!
Yet Love will dream and Faith will trust
(Since He who knows our need is just)
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress-trees! [3]
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day

Across the mournful marbles [1] play!
Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own!

We sped the time [2] with stories old,
Wrought puzzles out, and riddles told,
Or stammered from our school-book lore
"The chief of Gambia's [3] golden shore."
How often since, when all the land
Was clay in Slavery's shaping hand,[4]
As if a trumpet called, I've heard
Dame Mercy Warren's rousing word:
"Does not the voice of reason cry,
Claim the first right which Nature gave,
From the red scourge of bondage fly
Nor deign to live a burdened slave!"
Our father rode again his ride
On Memphremagog's[5] wooded side;
Sat down again to moose and samp [6]
In trapper's hut and Indian camp;
Lived o'er the old idyllic ease
Beneath St. Francois' [7] hemlock trees;
Again for him the moonlight shone
On Norman cap and bodiced zone;[8]

Again he heard the violin play
Which led the village dance away,
And mingled in its merry whirl
The grandam and the laughing girl,
Or, nearer home, our steps he led
Where Salisbury's level marshes [1] spread
Mile-wide as flies the laden bee;
Where merry mowers, hale and strong,
Swept, scythe on scythe, their swaths along [2]
The low green prairies of the sea.
We shared the fishing off Boar's Head,[3]
And round the rocky Isles of Shoals
The hake-broil on the driftwood coals;
The chowder on the sand-beach made,
Dipped by the hungry, steaming hot,
With spoons of clam-shell from the pot.
We heard the tales of witchcraft old,
And dream and sign and marvel told
To sleepy listeners as they lay
Stretched idly on the salted hay,
Adrift along the winding shores,
When favoring breezes deigned to blow
The square sail of the gundalow,
And idle lay the useless oars.
Our mother, while she turned her wheel
Or run the new-knit stocking heel,

Told how the Indian hordes came down
At midnight on Cocheco town,[1]
And how her own great-uncle bore
His cruel scalp-mark to fourscore.
Recalling, in her fitting phrase,
So rich and picturesque and free
(The common unrhymed poetry
Of simple life and country ways),
The story of her early days, —
She made us welcome [2] to her home;
Old hearths grew wide to give us room;
We stole with her a frightened look
At the gray wizard's conjuring-book,
The fame whereof went far and wide
Through all the simple country-side;
We heard the hawks at twilight play,
The boat-horn on Piscataqua,[3]
The loon's weird laughter far away;
We fished her little trout-brook, knew
What flowers in wood and meadow grew,
What sunny hillsides autumn-brown
She climbed to shake the ripe nuts down,
Saw where in sheltered cove and bay
The ducks' black squadron anchored lay,
And heard the wild geese calling loud
Beneath the gray November cloud.

Then, haply, with a look more grave
And soberer tone, some tale she gave [1]
From painful Sewel's [2] ancient tome,
Beloved in every Quaker home,
Of faith fire-winged [3] by martyrdom,
Or Chalkley's Journal, old and quaint,[4] —
Gentlest of skippers, rare sea-saint! —
Who, when the dreary calms prevailed,
And water-butt and bread-cask failed,
And cruel, hungry eyes pursued
His portly presence, mad for food,
With dark hints muttered under breath
Of casting lots for life or death,
Offered,[5] if Heaven withheld supplies,
To be himself the sacrifice.
Then, suddenly, as if to save
The good man from his living grave,
A ripple on the water grew,
A school of porpoise flashed in view.
"Take, eat," he said, "and be content;
These fishes in my stead are sent
By Him who gave the tangled ram
To spare the child of Abraham."[6]

Our uncle,[7] innocent of books,
Was rich in lore of fields and brooks,

The ancient teachers never dumb
Of Nature's unhoused lyceum.[1]
In moons and tides and weather wise,
He read the clouds as prophecies,
And foul or fair could well divine,
By many an occult hint and sign,
Holding the cunning-warded keys
To all the woodcraft mysteries;
Himself to Nature's heart so near
That all her voices in his ear
Of beast or bird had meanings clear,
Like Apollonius[2] of old,
Who knew the tales the sparrows told,
Or Hermes,[3] who interpreted
What the sage cranes of Nilus said;
A simple, guileless, childlike man,
Content to live where life began;
Strong only on his native grounds,
The little world of sights and sounds
Whose girdle was the parish bounds,
Whereof his fondly partial pride
The common features magnified,
As Surrey hills to mountains grew
In White of Selborne's[4] loving view,
He told how teal and loon he shot,
And how the eagle's eggs he got,

The feats on pond and river done,
The prodigies of rod and gun;
Till, warming with the tales he told,
Forgotten was the outside cold,
The bitter wind unheeded blew,
From ripening corn the pigeons flew,
The partridge drummed i' the wood, the mink
Went fishing down the river-brink.
In fields with bean or clover gay,
The woodchuck, like a hermit gray,
  Peered from the doorway of his cell;
The muskrat plied the mason's trade,
And tier by tier his mud-walls laid;
And from the shagbark overhead
  The grizzled squirrel dropped his shell.

Next, the dear aunt,[1] whose smile of cheer
And voice in dreams I see and hear, —
The sweetest woman ever Fate
Perverse denied a household mate,
Who, lonely, homeless, not the less
Found peace in love's unselfishness,
And welcome whereso'er she went,
A calm and gracious element,
Whose presence seemed the sweet income
And womanly atmosphere of home, —

Called up her girlhood memories,
The huskings and the apple-bees,
The sleigh-rides and the summer sails,
Weaving through all the poor details
And homespun warp of circumstance [1]
A golden woof-thread of romance.
For well she kept her genial mood
And simple faith of maidenhood;
Before her still a cloud-land lay,
The mirage loomed across her way;
The morning dew, that dried so soon
With others, glistened at her noon;
Through years of toil and soil and care,
From glossy tress to thin gray hair,
All unprofaned she held apart
The virgin fancies of the heart.
Be shame to him of woman born
Who had for such but [2] thought of scorn.

There, too, our elder sister plied
Her evening task the stand beside; [3]
A full, rich nature, free to trust,
Truthful and almost sternly just,
Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act,
And make her generous thought a fact,
Keeping with many a light disguise

The secret of self-sacrifice.
O heart sore-tried! thou hast the best
That Heaven itself could give thee, — rest,
Rest from all bitter thoughts and things!
How many a poor one's blessing went
With thee beneath the low green tent
Whose curtain never [1] outward swings!

As one who held herself a part
Of all she saw, and let her heart
Against the household bosom lean,
Upon the motley-braided [2] mat
Our youngest and our dearest sat,
Lifting her large, sweet, asking eyes,
Now bathed within the fadeless green
And holy peace of Paradise.
Oh, looking from some heavenly hill,
Or from the shade of saintly palms,
Or silver reach of river calms,
Do those large eyes behold me still?
With me one little year ago: [3] —
The chill weight of the winter snow
For months upon her grave has lain;
And now, when summer south-winds blow
And brier and harebell bloom again,
I tread the pleasant paths we trod,

I see the violet-sprinkled sod,
Whereon she leaned, too frail and weak
The hillside flowers she loved to seek,
Yet following me where'er I went
With dark eyes full of love's content.
The birds are glad; the brier-rose fills
The air with sweetness; all the hills
Stretch green to June's unclouded sky;
But still I wait with ear and eye
For something gone which should be nigh,
A loss in all familiar things,[1]
In flower that blooms, and bird that sings.
And yet, dear heart! remembering thee,
Am I not richer than of old?
Safe in thy immortality,
What change can reach the wealth I hold?
What chance can mar the pearl and gold
Thy love hath left in trust with me?
And while in life's late afternoon,
Where cool and long the shadows grow,
I walk to meet the night that soon
Shall shape and shadow overflow,
I cannot feel that thou art far,
Since near at need the angels are;
And when the sunset gates unbar,
Shall I not see thee waiting stand,

And, white against the evening star,
The welcome of thy beckoning hand?

Brisk wielder of the birch and rule,
The master of the district school [1]
Held at the fire his favored place;
Its warm glow lit a laughing face
Fresh-hued and fair, where scarce appeared
The uncertain prophecy of beard.
He teased the mitten-blinded cat,
Played cross-pins on my uncle's hat,
Sang songs, and told us what befalls
In classic Dartmouth's college halls.
Born the wild Northern hills among,
From whence his yeoman father wrung
By patient toil subsistence scant,
Not competence and yet not want,
He early gained the power to pay
His cheerful, self-reliant way;
Could doff at ease his scholar's gown
To peddle wares from town to town;
Or through the long vacation's reach
In lonely lowland districts teach,
Where all the droll experience [2] found
At stranger hearths in boarding round,
The moonlit skater's keen delight,

The sleigh-drive through the frosty night,
The rustic party,[1] with its rough
Accompaniment of blind-man's-buff,
And whirling plate, and forfeits paid,
His winter task a pastime made.
Happy the snow-locked homes wherein
He tuned his merry violin,
Or played the athlete in the barn,
Or held the good dame's winding yarn,
Or mirth-provoking versions told
Of classic legends rare and old,
Wherein the scenes of Greece and Rome
Had all the commonplace of home,
And little seemed at best the odds
'Twixt Yankee peddlers and old gods;
Where Pindus-born Arachthus[2] took
The guise of any grist-mill brook,
And dread Olympus[3] at his will
Became a huckleberry hill.
A careless boy that night he seemed;
But at his desk he had the look
And air of one who wisely schemed,
And hostage from the future took
In trainèd thought and lore of book.
Large-brained, clear-eyed, — of such as he
Shall Freedom's young apostles be

Who, following in War's bloody trail,
Shall every lingering wrong assail;
All chains from limb and spirit strike,
Uplift the black and white alike;
Scatter before their swift advance
The darkness and the ignorance,
The pride, the lust, the squalid sloth,
Which nurtured Treason's monstrous growth,
Made murder pastime, and the hell
Of prison-torture possible;
The cruel lie of caste refute,
Old forms remold, and substitute
For Slavery's lash the freeman's will,
For blind routine, wise-handed skill;
A school-house plant [1] on every hill,
Stretching in radiate nerve-lines thence
The quick wires of intelligence;
Till North and South together brought
Shall own the same electric thought,
In peace a common flag salute,
And, side by side in labor's free
And unresentful rivalry,
Harvest the fields wherein they fought.

Another guest [2] that winter night
Flashed back from lustrous eyes the light

Unmarked by time, and yet not young,
The honeyed music of her tongue
And words of meekness scarcely told
A nature passionate and bold,
Strong, self-concentered, spurning guide,
Its milder features dwarfed beside
Her unbent will's majestic pride.
She sat among us, at the best,
A not unfeared, half-welcome guest,
Rebuking with her cultured phrase
Our homeliness of words and ways.
A certain pard-like, treacherous grace
Swayed the lithe limbs and dropped the lash,
Lent the white teeth their dazzling flash;
And under low brows, black with night,
Rayed out at times a dangerous light;
The sharp heat-lightnings [1] of her face
Presaging ill to him whom Fate
Condemned to share her love or hate.
A woman tropical, intense
In thought and act, in soul and sense,
She blended in a like degree
The vixen and the devotee,
Revealing with each freak of feint
The temper of Petruchio's Kate,[2]
The raptures of Siena's saint.[3]

Her tapering hand and rounded wrist
Had facile power to form a fist;
The warm, dark languish of her eyes
Were never safe from wrath's surprise.
Brows saintly calm and lips devout
Knew every change of scowl and pout;
And the sweet voice had notes more high
And shrill for social battle-cry.
Since then what old cathedral town
Has missed her pilgrim staff and gown,
What convent-gate has held its lock
Against the challenge of her knock!
Through Smyrna's plague-hushed thoroughfares,
Up sea-set Malta's rocky stairs,
Gray olive slopes of hills that hem
Thy tombs and shrines, Jerusalem,
Or startling on her desert throne
The crazy Queen of Lebanon [1]
With claims fantastic as her own,
Her tireless feet have held their way;
And still, unrestful, bowed, and gray,
She watches under Eastern skies,
  With hope each day renewed and fresh,
  The Lord's quick coming in the flesh,
Whereof she dreams and prophesies!
Where'er her troubled path may be,

The Lord's sweet pity with her go!
The outward wayward life we see,
The hidden springs we may not know.
Nor is it given us to discern
What threads the fatal sisters spun,
Through what ancestral years has run
The sorrow with the woman born,
What forged her cruel chain of moods,
What set her feet in solitudes,
And held the love within her mute,
What mingled madness in the blood,
A lifelong discord and annoy,
Water of tears with oil of joy,
And hid within the folded bud
Perversities of flower and fruit.
It is not ours to separate
The tangled skein of will and fate,
To show what metes and bounds should stand
Upon the soul's debatable land,
And between choice and Providence
Divide the circle of events;
But He who knows our frame is just,[1]
Merciful and compassionate,
And full of sweet assurances
And hope for all the language is,
That He remembereth we are dust!

At last [1] the great logs, crumbling low,
Sent out a dull and duller glow,
The bull's-eye watch that hung in view,
Ticking its weary circuit through,
Pointed with mutely-warning sign
Its black hand to the hour of nine.
That sign the pleasant circle broke:
My uncle ceased his pipe to smoke,
Knocked from its bowl the refuse gray,
And laid it tenderly away,
Then roused himself to safely cover
The dull red brand with ashes over.
And while, with care, our mother laid
The work aside, her steps she stayed
One moment, seeking to express
Her grateful sense of happiness
For food and shelter, warmth and health,
And love's contentment more than wealth,
With simple wishes (not the weak,
Vain prayers which no fulfillment seek,
But such as warm the generous heart,
O'er-prompt to do with Heaven its part)
That none might lack, that bitter night,
For bread and clothing, warmth and light.
Within our beds awhile we heard
The wind that round the gables roared,

With now and then a ruder shock,
Which made our very bedsteads rock.
We heard the loosened clapboards tost,
The board-nails snapping in the frost;
And on us, through the unplastered wall,
Felt the light sifted snow-flakes fall;
But sleep stole on, as sleep will do
When hearts are light and life is new;
Faint and more faint the murmurs grew,
Till in the summer-land of dreams
They softened to the sound of streams,
Low stir of leaves, and dip of oars,
And lapsing waves on quiet shores.

Next morn we wakened with the shout
Of merry voices high and clear;
And saw the teamsters drawing near
To break the drifted highways out.
Down the long hillside treading slow
We saw the half-buried oxen go,
Shaking the snow from heads uptost,
Their straining nostrils white with frost.
Before our door the straggling train
Drew up, an added team to gain.
The elders threshed their hands a-cold,
Passed, with the cider-mug, their jokes

From lip to lip; the younger folks
Down the loose snow-banks, wrestling, rolled,
Then toiled again the cavalcade
O'er windy hill, through clogged ravine,
And woodland paths that wound between
Low drooping pine-boughs winter-weighed.
From every barn a team afoot,
At every house a new recruit,
Where, drawn by Nature's subtlest law,
Haply the watchful young men saw
Sweet doorway pictures of the curls
And curious eyes of merry girls,
Lifting their hands in mock defense
Against the snow-ball's compliments,
And reading in each missive tost [1]
The charm which Eden never lost.

We heard once more the sleigh-bells' sound;
And, following where the teamsters led,
The wise old Doctor went his round,
Just pausing at our door to say,
In the brief autocratic way
Of one who, prompt at Duty's call,
Was free to urge her claim on all,
That some poor neighbor sick abed
At night our mother's aid would need.

For, one in generous thought and deed,
What mattered in the sufferer's sight
The Quaker matron's inward light,[1]
The Doctor's mail of Calvin's creed?[2]
All hearts confess the saints elect
Who, twain in faith, in love agree,
And melt not in an acid sect[3]
The Christian pearl of charity!

So days went on: a week had passed
Since the great world was heard from last.
The Almanac we studied o'er,
Read and reread our little store
Of books and pamphlets, scarce a score;[4]
One harmless novel, mostly hid
From younger eyes, a book forbid,
And poetry, (or good or bad,
A single book was all we had,)
Where Ellwood's meek, drab-skirted Muse,
A stranger to the heathen Nine,[5]
Sang, with a somewhat nasal whine,
The wars of David and the Jews.
At last the floundering carrier bore
The village paper[6] to our door.
Lo! broadening outward as we read,
To warmer zones the horizon spread;

In panoramic length unrolled
We saw the marvel that it told.
Before us passed the painted Creeks,
And daft McGregor on his raids
In Costa Rica's everglades.
And up Taygetus winding slow
Rode Ypsilanti's Mainote Greeks,
A Turk's head at each saddle bow!
Welcome to us its week-old news,
Its corner for the rustic Muse,
Its monthly gauge of snow and rain,
Its record, mingling in a breath
The wedding bell and dirge of death;
Jest, anecdote, and love-lorn tale,
The latest culprit sent to jail;
Its hue and cry of stolen and lost,
Its vendue sales and goods at cost,
And traffic calling loud for gain.
We felt the stir of hall and street,
The pulse of life that round us beat;
The chill embargo of the snow
Was melted in the genial glow;
Wide swung again our ice-locked door,
And all the world was ours once more!

Clasp, Angel, of the backward look

And folded wings of ashen gray
And voice of echoes far away,
The brazen covers of thy book;
The weird palimpsest old and vast,
Wherein thou hid'st the spectral past;
Where, closely mingling, pale and glow
The characters of joy and woe;
The monographs of outlived years,
Or smile-illumed or dim with tears,
Green hills of life that slope to death,
And haunts of home, whose vistaed trees
Shade off to mournful cypresses
With the white amaranths underneath.
Even while I look, I can but heed
The restless sands' incessant fall,
Importunate hours that hours succeed,
Each clamorous with its own sharp need,
And duty keeping pace with all.
Shut down and clasp the heavy lids;
I hear again the voice that bids
The dreamer leave his dream midway
For larger hopes and graver fears:
Life greatens in these later years,
The century's aloe flowers to-day!

Yet, haply in some lull of life,

Some Truce of God [1] which breaks its strife,
The worldling's eyes shall gather dew,
Dreaming in throngful city ways
Of winter joys his boyhood knew;
And dear and early friends — the few
Who yet remain — shall pause to view
These Flemish pictures of old days;
Sit with me by the homestead hearth,
And stretch the hands of memory forth
To warm them at the wood-fire's blaze!
And thanks untraced [2] to lips unknown
Shall greet me like the odors blown
From unseen meadows newly mown,
Or lilies floating in some pond,
Wood-fringed, the wayside gaze beyond;
The traveler owns the grateful sense
Of sweetness near, he knows not whence,
And, pausing, takes with forehead bare
The benediction of the air.

The End

NOTES

THE RAVEN

37, 1. Once upon: Though the poem opens with a phrase that reminds one of children's stories, which usually begin with "Once upon a time," the thought immediately shifts to a heavy, solemn tone. Look at the words in the first line suggesting this key-note: *midnight, dreary, pondered, weak, weary.* What later passages, by a whimsical tone of humor, somewhat relieve the intensely melancholy drift of the poem?

2. **Napping:** Notice the n-sounds beginning successive words. This effect, common in poetry and in the headlines of sensational newspapers, is called alliteration. The word *napping* rhymes with *tapping* at the end of the line. Such rhyme is called internal. Alliteration and internal rhyme are two of the devices used often by Poe in the poem and showing plainly his craftsmanship. There is much to learn about the form of "The Raven." It is a lyric poem, *i.e.*, one that aims not to tell a story but to express the inmost feelings of the author as he is influenced by the world about him. "Snow-Bound" is also personal, while "The Courtship of Miles Standish" is an epic, a poem whose principal object is to tell a story in the form of verse. Poe's poem is written in six-line stanzas, of which the first and third lines have internal rhyme and the second, fourth, fifth, and sixth rhyme. A peculiarity in the rhyme scheme is that the middle of the fourth line rhymes with the end of the third. The sixth line is much the same in each stanza. The meter is unusual, but the lines are not difficult to scan. In each stanza, eight trochaic feet, which are complete or which lack

the last unaccented syllable, make up each line, except the sixth line. The sixth line has four trochaic feet, lacking the last unaccented syllable. What elisions or substitutions do you discover in the one hundred and eight lines of the poem?

3. **Bleak December:** The poet seems to have selected this phrase as being more desolate than the "lonesome October" of "Ulalume," a poem on about the same general theme.

4. **Ghost:** An interesting metaphor. Each stick of wood in the fire, burning almost out, threw a flickering shadow which the poet calls a ghost.

5. **Sought:** The word was "tried" in *The American Whig Review*, February, 1845. Why is "sought" better in this place?

38, 1. Lenore: This proper name is a favorite of Poe's. See for instance his poem, "Lenore," a stanza of which is as follows:

Ah, broken is the golden bowl! the spirit flown forever!
Let the bell toll! — a saintly soul floats on the Stygian river;
And, Guy De Vere, hast *thou* no tear? — weep now or never more!
See! on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy love, Lenore!
Come! let the burial rite be read — the funeral song be sung! —
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young —
A dirge for her the doubly dead in that she died so young.

The theme which appealed to this poet most was the idea of sorrow for a lost loved one.

2. **Purple curtain:** There is a strange melodic fascination about the combination of sounds in this line, altogether apart from the sense. Compare a similar line in Mrs. Browning's "The Courtship of Lady Geraldine":

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air, a purple curtain.

3. **Darkness:** The poetical condensation and the inverted word order of the poem cause some difficulty in understanding the ideas. Here the condensation is a source of trouble to some readers. The idea is that when the narrator opened the door, he saw nothing outside. It was entirely dark.

"Darkness" is therefore to be explained as used in an independent phrase, or as part of some such filled out sentence as, "I found darkness there."

39. 1. Dreaming dreams: Can you imagine what these were?

2. **Stillness:** Would "darkness," the word of an early edition, be better here?

3. **Turning:** This participle modifies "I," in the next line.

4. **Again I heard:** In the poem as first printed in *The Evening Mirror* the order was, "I heard again." Why did the poet change?

5. **Thereat is:** Did you notice that this rhymes with "lattice," of the preceding line?

40, 1. A stately Raven: Possibly his reading of Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* may have influenced Poe to introduce a raven into a poem, for in reviewing Dickens's story he explained how Dickens might have made more of the "Grip" of that story. Have you ever heard a raven talk?

2. **Bust of Pallas:** After he had written the poem, Poe analyzed it most minutely; he explained for instance that the reason he chose a *bust* for the bird to alight on was that this would give the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage; and the reason he chose a bust of *Pallas* in particular was to show the classical scholarship of the lover and to secure a good sonorous sound. Pallas-Athene, the Greek goddess corresponding to the Roman Minerva, is represented as armed with helmet and spear, wearing on her breast the shield, given to her by Zeus, with a border of snakes and the head of Medusa in the center. She is often accompanied by an owl, the symbol of wisdom, for she was the goddess of wisdom, war, and the liberal arts.

3. **Ebony bird:** Poe was a master of epithets. Consider what the word "ebony" suggests to your mind as used here.

4. **Plutonian shore:** That is, regions of the lower world. Pluto, the brother of Zeus, was the god of darkness, ruler over the infernal regions.

5. **Nevermore:** Poe asserts that he selected this word after the longest consideration and most thorough search as the one word that best expressed the central idea he wished to convey in the poem. As a matter of fact it is probable that he stumbled on the word by chance as one fitting in well with his general morbid feelings; already before he wrote this poem he had used the expression "no more" a number of times in his poems. If by "theme" is meant some truth which may be stated in an abstract, general phrase, the theme of "The Raven" may be expressed in several ways, as desolation after the blighting of hope, sorrow for a lost loved one, unmerciful disaster of destiny, struggle with the inevitable, utter despair, or, as Poe himself put it, "mournful and never-ending remembrance." In any case, "nevermore," whether chosen deliberately or not, seems to sum up the emotion.

In the history of literature Poe plainly belongs to the romantic school of emotional poets like Coleridge and Shelley; but as is usual in American literature he was a score of years later in his time of production than were the English romantic poets to whom he was spiritually akin. In the particular phase of literature known as American, Poe stands alone, for he is different in tone and manner from the New England school of poets contemporary with him.

6. **To hear:** That is, he wondered much that the raven could so plainly understand what was said to it.

41, 1. **Living human:** "Sublunary" in early text.

2. **Placid bust:** Does the word "placid" help to give significant meaning, or is it merely used to fill up the meter of the line? Compare "pallid bust," page 45, where the adjective gives an idea of dull whiteness in contrast to the ebony black of the bird.

3. **Then the bird said:** "Quoth the raven" in early text.

4. **Startled:** In order to gain the alliterative effect the poet changed "wondering" of the early text to "startled." The word modifies "I" of the next line.

42, 1. Followed fast, etc.: The lines were originally,

Followed fast and followed faster: so, when Hope he would adjure,
Stern Despair returned, instead of the sweet Hope he dared adjure,
That sad answer, Nevermore.

2. **Sad soul:** The early text read "fancy," changed to "sad soul" for the sake of the alliteration and the added seriousness of the word *sad*.

3. **Grim, ungainly:** There is a weird effect in this line by the heaping up of melancholy, harsh-sounding adjectives.

4. **Velvet:** Whether the width of appeal to the senses on pages 42 and 43 was intentional or accidental no one can tell. Certain it is that the range is extraordinary. The word "velvet" on page 42 gives the sense of touch; "violet" on page 43, the sense of sight; "perfumed," the sense of smell; "tinkled," the sense of hearing; "nepenthe," the sense of taste. Is there anything like this elsewhere in American poetry? How could footfalls *tinkle* on a carpet?

43, 1. Seraphim. The line originally read,

Swung by angels whose faint footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor.

2. "**Wretch**": The narrator is talking to himself.

3. **Nepenthe:** An ancient drug used to give relief from sorrow or pain.

4. **Evil:** Almost mechanically perfect, the poem shows a flaw or two, as the faulty rhyme in this line.

5. **Balm in Gilead:** A valuable gum of healing properties referred to in *Jeremiah* viii, 22: "For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no *balm in Gilead?* is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" As used by Poe, the expression means comfort, healing, relief from distress and desolation.

44, 1. That God, we: That God [whom] we. The omission of the relative pronoun, common in the colloquial style,

is not infrequent in condensed poetry. What other colloquialisms appear in the poem, and what is their effect?

2. **Aidenn**: For *Eden*.

3. **Rare and radiant**: Compare a line in the second stanza.

4. **Beak from out my heart**: Poe speaks of these words as the first metaphorical expression in the poem.

45, 1. **Demon's**: The earlier reading was "demon."

2. **Lamp-light**: In answer to the criticism on this line, that the lamp could not throw the shadow of the bird on the floor, Poe says: "My conception was that of the bracket candelabrum affixed against the wall, high up above the door and bust, as is often seen in the English palaces, and even in some of the better houses of New York"

THE COURTSHIP OF MILES STANDISH

47, 1. **In the Old Colony days**: Beginning with a fairly definite time reference, followed by a definite place reference and the mention of a historical person, Longfellow suggests at once the atmosphere of his poem, and puts the reader in the frame of mind to follow the narrative of events in the life of Captain Miles Standish of Plymouth Colony. The poem, being narrative, is thus seen at the start to belong to the general class called epic, to which belong such poems as Longfellow's "Hiawatha" and "Evangeline," Scott's "Lady of the Lake," and Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon." Compare note **37**, 2.

2. **Cordovan**: In the Spanish town of Cordova the manufacture of goatskin leather was an important industry.

3. **Miles Standish**: The Plymouth captain, a real person of history, though the first character introduced into the poem is not for that reason necessarily the hero, even though the poem takes his name for its title. Yet, if by hero is meant, in the study of literature, the central male character of a story, *i.e.*, the character around whom the action of the narrative centers, surely Standish is the hero of this poem,

for his proxy courtship is the basis for the story and his actions give structure to the poem.

As a matter of history, Captain Standish was thirty-six years old when the Mayflower reached Plymouth, but the poet, using history for the purpose of literary art, makes the Puritan captain seem older than thirty-six. Near the site of Standish's house at Duxbury, near Plymouth (in Massachusetts), there has been erected a monument 110 feet high, surmounted by a statue.

The historical basis for the poem can be easily understood from the following extract from Anderson's *Grammar School History of the United States:*

"The first permanent settlement of New England was by a small band of Pilgrims, dissenters from the Church of England, who had fled from their own country to find an asylum from religious persecution. They were known in England as Puritans.

"They at first went to Amsterdam, in Holland, whence they removed to Leyden. At Leyden they lived eleven years in great harmony, under the pastoral care of John Robinson; but, from various causes, they became dissatisfied with their residence, and desired to plant a colony in America, where they might enjoy their civic and religious rights without molestation.

"As many as could be accommodated embarked on board a vessel called the Speedwell. The ship sailed to Southampton, England, where she was joined by another ship called the Mayflower, with other Pilgrims from London. The two vessels set sail, but had not gone far before the Speedwell was found to need repairs, and they entered the port of Dartmouth, England. A second time they started, but again put back — this time to Plymouth, where the Speedwell was abandoned as unseaworthy.

"The Mayflower finally sailed alone, with about one hundred passengers, the most distinguished of whom were John Carver, William Brewster, Miles Standish, William Bradford,

and Edward Winslow. After a boisterous passage they reached Cape Cod Bay; and there, in the cabin of the Mayflower, they signed a compact for their government, and unanimously elected Carver Governor for one year.

"Several days were spent in searching for a favorable locality At length, on the 21st of December, 1620, they landed at a place which they called Plymouth, in memory of the hospitalities which had been bestowed upon them at the last English port from which they had sailed. The winter was severe, and in less than five months nearly half of that Pilgrim band died from the effects of exposure and privations, Carver and his wife being among the number. Bradford was thereupon elected Governor, and he continued during thirty years to be a prominent man in the Colony."

48, 1. Sword of Damascus: Since the poem deals with real and fictitious incidents of nearly three hundred years ago, it is natural that there should be in the descriptions a number of unfamiliar terms. Standish's weapons and armor need explanation: the *cutlass* was a short, curved sword; the *corselet*, a breastplate of armor; *sword of Damascus*, a sword made of the fine steel for which the Syrian city of Damascus was famous — such swords were often inscribed with a sentence from the Koran; *fowling-piece*, a light gun for shooting birds; *musket*, a war gun which was in colonial times fired by means of a slow-match of twisted rope, but which is now fired by a spring lock; *matchlock*, originally the lock of a musket, but later the gun itself. Some of the other peculiar words found in the poem will be defined, but many will be left for the ingenuity and the patience of the student to master in an unabridged dictionary like Webster's International, the Century, the Standard, or, so far as completed, the invaluable *New English Dictionary*, probably the best dictionary ever made in any language.

2. **Curved at the:** There has been much adverse criticism of Longfellow's meter, as being monotonous in its easy swing. Yet it is really this easy motion that makes the poem so

fascinating as it is to persons just learning the pleasures of poetry. The lines have six accents, the number of unaccented syllables varying. In general the feet, except for the sixth, are dactylic; the sixth is trochaic. Yet the variations from dactylic in the first five feet are sufficiently numerous to prevent the poem from being monotonously regular. The ninth line is an example of the normal meter — five dactylic feet followed by one trochaic, six accents in all; but this is the first entirely normal line in the poem, for in each of the first eight lines there are some substitutions for dactylic feet, usually trochaic feet.

3. **John Alden**: Twenty-one years old when the colony was founded.

49, 1. **Not Angles**: The Angles were one of the Germanic tribes that emigrated from the Continent to England; they gave their name to England. English historians are fond of telling the story to which Longfellow alludes. It is entertainingly told in the following extract from Merrill's *English History*:

" It was in the year 597 that the first missionaries to the Saxons landed in Britain. They were sent by Pope Gregory the Great. Before he became Pope his pity had been moved by the sight of some Saxon children, sold for slaves in the market-place of Rome. ' Who are these beautiful boys? ' asked Gregory; ' and are they Christian children? ' ' No,' said the slave-merchant; ' they are Angles, and come from a heathen land.' Gregory was grieved and answered, ' If they were Christians, they would be angels, not Angles' (*Non Angli, sed Angeli*)."

2. **scribe**: Frequently Longfellow employs a curiously involved word order which obscures the syntax of his sentence. In cases of doubt about his meaning, put the sentence into natural prose word order, and the difficulty will vanish; as for instance, here: Suddenly breaking the silence, Miles Standish, the Captain of Plymouth, interrupting the diligent scribe, spoke in the pride of his heart. By this

change, it becomes apparent instantly that " scribe " is the object of the participle " interrupting." It would be a pity to spend much time on the grammar of this poem except in such cases as the above, where the solution of the grammatical puzzle at once clears up the meaning.

3. **Flanders**: The Netherlands. Compare the adjective *Flemish*, pages 49 and 159.

4. **Arcabucero**: Spanish word for archer, here meaning musketeer. By scanning the line, you can readily determine the pronunciation of the difficult word.

50, 1. "**Truly the breath**," etc.: Compare *Psalms* xxxiii, 6 and 20.

2. **Serve yourself**: By Standish's first few speeches the poet conveys a distinct idea of the kind of man the captain was. Vivid characterization is a leading merit of the poem. The early introduction of the famous short, wise saying or adage of Captain Standish produces a humorous effect when the reader comes to what follows. This frolicsome humor shown in the poem is another of its merits, for truly the Pilgrim life was not all gloom.

3. **Rest**: A support for the gun when being fired.

51, 1. **Laughed**: Why did he laugh?

2. **Preacher**: The figure of speech by which the poet speaks of a howitzer, or small cannon, as a preacher is called metaphor. What other implied comparisons do you notice in the poem?

3. **Sagamore**: What is the effect of the introduction of the Indian words and names? A *sagamore* was a leader of one of the subdivisions of a tribe; a *sachem*, the chief of a tribe; a *pow-wow*, a medicine-man or conjuror. *Aspinet*, *Samoset*, etc., were real names mentioned in early chronicles of Plymouth.

4. **Forest**: Syntax?

52, 1. **Three**: The condensation of poetry has already been mentioned, **38**, 3. How do you explain the construction of " three "?

53, 1. Barriffe's Artillery Guide: Colonel William Barriffe, a Puritan soldier, wrote a book entitled *Militarie Discipline; or, The Young Artillery Man.*

2. **Commentaries of Caesar:** Not knowing Latin, the captain read in a translation by an English scholar the commentaries written by Julius Cæsar on his wars with the Gauls. The account of the battle alluded to is in Section 10 of the second book of Cæsar's commentaries.

3. **Thumb-marks thick:** Alliteration.

54, 1. Homeward bound: The time when the chief events of the poem happened is exactly fixed by this historical reference. The Mayflower sailed homeward April 5, 1621.

55, 1. 'Better be first,' etc.: This is a fact of history, as can be verified by referring to Plutarch's life of Cæsar. *Iberian* means Spanish.

56, 1. Nothing was heard, etc.: Is the repetition of this line a blemish?

57, 1. Priscilla: Can you imagine to whom Alden was writing the letters, and what he said in them about Priscilla? Note the poet's method of introducing the name of the heroine of the poem by intimating that Alden is in love with her.

58, 1. The Scriptures: See *Genesis* ii, 18.

2. **Alone in the world:** "Mr. Molines, and his wife, his sone and his servant, dyed the first winter. Only his daughter Priscilla survived and married with John Alden, who are both living and have 11 children." (Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation.*)

59, 1. Taciturn: Reserved, silent. Used in its original sense as derived from the Latin.

60, 1. Just as a timepiece: So many comparisons occur in the poem that before the end the effect is tiresome. The poet seems to strain after comparisons. What others do you discover?

2. **Maxim:** Observe on pages 50 and 124 a word equivalent to "maxim."

62, 1. So the strong will prevailed. Compare page 61.

2. **Hanging gardens:** An allusion to the hanging gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders of the world. Does Longfellow's nature description seem to have the real spirit of the woods, or does it seem written from the library?

63, 1. **Followed the flying feet:** Is this a hint that Alden loved Priscilla before the Pilgrims left England?

2. **Astaroth . . . Baal:** Ashtoreth was goddess of love, and Baal the chief god in the Phœnician worship referred to in *Judges* ii, 13, 1 *Samuel* xii, 10, and 1 *Kings* xi, 1–5. Note Alden's Puritanical repression of his own natural emotions.

64, 1. **Children:** Metaphor. The poet speaks of the mayflowers as children lost in the woods.

65, 1. **Carded wool:** In the process of spinning, the wool was first picked clear of specks and burs. Then it was carded, that is, combed out into straight lengths, the card being something like the currycomb used in cleaning horses. After being carded, the wool was pure white.

2. **Old Puritan anthem:** In the picture of colonial life the poet has introduced here a most characteristic touch. The Psalms, strong and rugged in words and music, were what the Pilgrims liked in their meeting-houses and in their home singing. That stirring exhortation to praise the Lord, viz., the hundredth Psalm, with music going back to the time of Luther, the German reformer, was a favorite song as translated by Henry Ainsworth. Persecuted in England, Ainsworth in 1590 fled to Holland. Many of his commentaries and translations were "Imprinted at Amsterdam."

66, 1. **Life:** Syntax?

2. **Hand to the plow:** *Luke* ix, 62.

3. **Mercy endureth forever:** *Jeremiah* xxxiii, 11.

72, 1. **Hugh Standish:** Compare page 123. A paragraph from Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrims* throws light on Longfellow's allusion to the ancestry of Miles Standish: "There are at this time in England two ancient families of the name, one of Standish Hall, and the other of Duxbury Park, both in Lancashire, who trace their descent from a common

ancestor, Ralph de Standish, living in 1221. There seems always to have been a military spirit in the family. Froissart, relating in his *Chronicles* the memorable meeting between Richard II and Wat Tyler, says that after the rebel was struck from his horse by William Walworth, ' then a squyer of the kynges alyted, called John Standysshe, and he drewe out his sworde, and put into Wat Tyler's belye, and so he dyed.' For this act Standish was knighted. In 1415 another Sir John Standish fought at the battle of Agincourt. From his giving the name of Duxbury to the town where he settled, near Plymouth, and calling his eldest son Alexander (a common name in the Standish family) I have no doubt that Miles was a scion from this ancient and warlike stock."

2. **Family arms:** Longfellow's description of the Standish family arms is difficult, for the words used in heraldry are strange. The coat of arms consisted of crest, shield, and motto. The *crest* was the ornament worn above the shield on the helmet. In the Standish coat of arms the crest was a cock *argent, i.e.*, silver in color except for the *comb*, which was the fleshly tuft growing on the cock's head, and the *wattle*, which was the fleshly wrinkled excrescence growing under the throat of the cock. Both comb and wattle were *gules*, that is, red. The rest of the *blazon*, or coat of arms, is not given.

73, 1. **"Why don't you speak for yourself, John?"** This question has been so often quoted that it has become a part of the language and is often used by persons who when they employ it have no consciousness of its source in this poem.

74, 1. **John Alden:** The first character in this part is John Alden. See the similar opening of Parts II, III, and VI. Because of this putting of Alden to the front and letting him win the hand of Priscilla, some critics call him the hero of the poem.

2. **Apocalyptical splendors:** That is, glories described by St. John in the Book of Revelation. See especially *Revelation* xxi, 10, 11, and 15.

75, 1. **Dulse**: A kind of sea-weed. Other words having the flavor of old New England days are: "merestead" and "glebe," page 113.

2. **David's trangression**: See 2 *Samuel* xi and xii.

77, 1. **Walls of its waters**: See the story of the escape of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, *Exodus* xiii and xiv, especially the twenty-first and twenty-second verses of the fourteenth chapter.

2. **Her**: Syntax?

78, 1. **Seven houses**: What other details do you notice descriptive of Plymouth? Try to form as distinct a picture as possible.

2. **Hainault or Brabant**: Counties of the Netherlands.

79, 1. **Sped**: That is, prospered, succeeded.

80, 1. **Wat Tyler**: See note **72**, 1. Observe how Standish in his anger contemptuously compares Alden with the traitor Wat Tyler.

2. **You, too, Brutus**: For this allusion consult Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*. What have you observed thus far regarding the nature and range of Longfellow's allusions?

81, 1. **Alden was left alone**: The sentence length is here skilfully varied. Be observant of such variations.

2. **Father who seeth in secret**: *Matthew* vi, 4.

82, 1. **The hill**: Metaphor. Elder Brewster is spoken of as a snow-covered hill near to heaven. Brewster was the ruling elder of the Plymouth church and preached when John Robinson, the teaching elder or pastor, was absent.

2. **The chronicles old**: In this case the old chronicle containing the sentence about the sifting of three kingdoms is an election sermon of 1668 by Stoughton.

3. **The skin**: Actually the incident occurred in 1622, when Canonicus, a chief of the Narragansett tribe, sent an Indian named Tisquantum to Governor Bradford with a rattlesnake skin filled with arrows. The latter returned it filled with powder and bullets.

83, 1. **Voice of the Elder**: John Robinson. The incident is historical.

85, 1. **A stir and a sound**: The first forty lines of Part V are a general description of the actions of the Plymouth people on the morning of the sailing of the Mayflower; the particular courtship story is resumed on page 88.

2. **Mighty men of King David**: 2 *Samuel* xxiii, 8.

86, 1. **Serried**: Are you interested in Longfellow's vivid, specific words?

87, 1. **Beautiful were his feet**: Adapted from the seventh verse of Chapter lii of *Isaiah*.

88, 1. **In the desert**: Compare page 103.

90, 1. **Spake**: Archaic for spoke. What is the purpose in the use of archaic words in the poem?

2. **Stephen and Richard and Gilbert**: Their last names were Hopkins, Warren, and Winslow.

3. **Plymouth Rock**: Consult note on the fourth line of the poem. At the present time in Plymouth a fragment of this flat granite rock is enclosed by a railing and protected by a canopy; the rock itself is covered by a wharf.

4. **Master**: Captain.

91, 1. **Gunwale**: Are you interested in this and in the other technical nautical words — "thwarts" and "keel," page 91; "windlass," "yards," and "braced," page 94?

92, 1. **"Here I remain"**: Do you call this the climax of the poem?

94, 1. **Set his hand**: See note **66**, 2.

2. **The Gurnet**: Gurnet's Nose is a headland at the entrance of Plymouth harbor.

3. **Field of the First Encounter**: The poet's appropriation of phrases from old chronicles is well illustrated here. A scouting party of Pilgrims landed from the Mayflower ahead of the rest. In Bradford and Winslow's journal quoted in Young's *Chronicles* there is mention of an engagement between this scouting party and a band of Indians: "So after we had given God thanks for our deliverance, we took our

shallop and went on our journey, and called this place The First Encounter."

95, 1. **Took courage**: *Acts* xxviii, 15.

96, 1. **Spirit of God**: *Genesis* i, 2: "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." How do you account for Longfellow's making so many quotations from the Bible?

99, 1. "No!" In reading Part VI aloud, boys and girls seem hugely to enjoy making this "No" very emphatic.

100, 1. **Like the beautiful rivers**: Adapted from *Genesis* ii, 10.

104, 1. **Direful wrath**: Compare Homer's *Iliad*, line 1:

Sing, O muse, the direful wrath of Achilles.

2. **Manner was changed**: In writing on the character of Priscilla, include mention of her fascinating changes in manner.

3. **Holy Land**: An allusion to the journeyings of the Crusaders to the sepulchre of the Saviour.

107, 1. **Friendship was**, etc.: An interesting sentence, in which emphasis is gained by the word order.

2. **Goliath . . . Og**: 1 *Samuel* xvii, 4, and *Deuteronomy* iii, 11.

3. **Wampum**: Beads made by North American Indians from colored shells.

108, 1. **Wattawamat**: "Among the rest Wituwamat bragged of the excellency of his knife. On the end of the handle there was pictured a woman's face: 'but,' said he, 'I have another at home wherewith I have killed both French and English, and that hath a man's face on it, and by and by these two must marry.' Further he said of that knife he there had, *Hinnaim namen, hinnaim michen, matta cuts;* that is to say, By and by it should see, and by and by it should eat, but not speak. Also Pecksuot, being a man of greater stature than the captain, told him, though he were a

great captain, yet he was but a little man; and, said he, 'though I be no sachem, yet I am a man of great strength and courage.' " (Winslow's *Relation of Standish's Expedition.*)

110, 1. The boaster: That is, Pecksuot.

111, 1. Out of the lightning thunder: Light travels faster than sound.

2. **Hobomok:** " Hobbamock stood by all this time as a spectator, and meddled not, observing how our men demeaned themselves in this action. All being here ended, smiling, he brake forth into these speeches to the Captain: 'Yesterday Pecksuot, bragging of his own strength and stature, said, though you were a great captain, yet you were but a little man; but to-day I see that you are big enough to lay him on the ground.' " (Winslow's *Relation.*) The poet has shortened the time; in the poem no day intervenes between the insult and the blow.

113, 1. The ships . . . came: This is another definite historical reference dating the time when the imaginary incidents of the poem are supposed to have occurred and helping to determine the amount of time elapsing in the narrative. The ships, Anne and Little James, arrived at Plymouth in August, 1623.

2. **Waxing valiant in fight:** *Hebrews* xi, 34.

114, 1. To this day: The descendants of John Alden still own the land where his house stood in Duxbury, on the Massachusetts coast, thirty-eight miles southeast of Boston. On the old homestead site the Alden descendants gather from many parts of the country each year for a family reunion.

115, 1. In the Proverbs: See the portion of the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs descriptive of the virtuous woman.

117, 1. Bertha . . . Helvetia: Bertha, the housewifely queen of a Burgundian king whose territory included Helvetia (Switzerland), is represented on monuments as seated on her throne in the act of spinning.

120, 1. Put them asunder: Adapted from the Biblical

sentence, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder," found in *Matthew* xix, 6, and *Mark* x, 9.

121, 1. **The sun**: Compare the description of the sun, page 87. See also the description of the high priest in the Bible — *Exodus* xxviii, 34–36.

2. **That of Ruth and of Boaz**: *Ruth* iv, 11 and 12.

122, 1. **Laudable custom of Holland**: Longfellow quotes the phrase from Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation:* "May 12 was the first marriage in this place, which, according to the *laudable custome of the Low-Countries*, in which they had lived, was thought most requisite to be performed by the magistrate, as being a civil thing, upon which many questions aboute inheritances doe depende, with other things most proper to their cognizans, and most consonante to the scripturs, *Ruth* iv, and no wher found in the gospell to be layed on the ministers as a part of their office."

123, 1. **Rack**: Vapor.

124, 1. **Kent**: A county in the southern part of England.

127, 1. **Pleased with the image**: What other instances have you found where the poet has attributed the emotions of men to inanimate objects?

2. **Valley of Eshcol**: *Numbers* xiii, 23.

128, 1. **Rebecca and Isaac**: *Genesis* xxiv, 64.

2. **Old and yet ever new**: The simple themes drawn from the universal experiences of men are the ones that in literature are the most popular. That is one reason why Longfellow's "Courtship of Miles Standish" has been so widely read. It is a true picture of colonial days in New England, but more than this it is a narrative of human experiences that seem true to nature no matter whether the Puritan life is understood by the reader or not.

SNOW-BOUND

129, 1. A Winter Idyl: In form, Whittier's poem, like Poe's and unlike Longfellow's, is personal. It aims not to tell a particular story, but to give a picture of the life of Whittier's family during a winter storm. In presenting this specific picture, the poet has been so true to family life that for two generations men everywhere who have been familiar with rustic scenes and people have exclaimed on the reality of Whittier's description. Aiming to describe just what he knew himself, his own household, he has succeeded in making a description that seems universal. Yet he has chosen to depict his characters in action rather than at rest. Since the family was kept indoors by the snow, it seems natural that the idyl should cover several days, as it does; the main action covers three days with the two intervening nights, but the whole time mentioned is a week. Over four hundred of the seven hundred and fifty-nine lines of the poem are, however, devoted to the characterization of the family gathered about the "clean-winged hearth," one evening. It is an ideal picturing of the life of an old-fashioned country home. This poem, then, called by Whittier a winter idyl and often referred to as a pastoral poem, may be considered lyric in character.

The versification is simple. Most of the lines are regular iambic tetrameter, rhyming in couplets. Occasionally the lines begin with a trochaic instead of with an iambic foot, and there are infrequent substitutions for iambic feet in other parts of a line, as on page 141, where the second foot of the twelfth line is a spondee. Occasionally, too, three lines in succession, as on page 133, rhyme; or there is a line which jumps over a couplet to rhyme with the line that follows the couplet, for instance, *drew*, *low*, *snow*, and *through*, on page 132. The student will discover for himself a few other irregularities in the rhyme scheme. There has been adverse criticism of the nature of the rhymes. The ears of critics are offended by such harsh rhymes as *on* and *sun*, page 131;

breath and *path*, page 132; *mute* and *foot*, page 133. But in both meter and rhyme the poem is for the most part simple and pleasing.

2. **Occult philosophy:** What is the use of introducing the poem by such a quotation as this?

3. **That brief December day:** From this time reference are you misled into thinking that the poem will be a story?

130, 1. **Homespun stuff:** Compare page 139. The poet explains in a brief autobiographical letter, written in 1882, that his mother, in addition to her ordinary house duties, kept busy spinning and weaving the linen and woolen cloth needed in the family.

2. **Coming:** As in "The Raven" and "The Courtship," when a sentence seems difficult to understand it is well to try turning the words into an ordinary prose order; for example, *told the coming of the snow-storm*. Try this with any sentences that puzzle you at your first reading. After thus re-phrasing the sentences, you will be ready to express an opinion concerning the simplicity or the complexity, the clearness or the obscurity, of Whittier's sentences. You will know whether to call Whittier a smooth, cultured writer or an unpolished, homespun poet.

3. **Heard the roar:** The Whittier home, a short walk from Haverhill on the road to Salisbury, in the northeastern corner of Massachusetts, was within sound of the sea.

4. **Stanchion:** The description of the barn is wonderfully vivid. It strikes so many chords of memory that no matter how many times the person who has seen such places reads the description he thrills with enjoyment of the memories. Are you familiar with all the words used in the description?

5. **Crested:** Compare note **72**, 2.

6. **Querulous:** Poets often assign to inanimate objects or to the lower animals the emotions and thoughts of men. Here Whittier has used subjective description in saying that the cock sent a *querulous* challenge. Is the same true of "lusty greeting," on page 133?

131, 1. Like . . . ghosts: Likening the clothes-line posts to ghosts, Whittier has used a simile, while Poe in line 8 of "The Raven," likening the ember to a ghost, used a metaphor. What difference do you notice between simile and metaphor? Some of Whittier's figures of speech, like some of Longfellow's notable sentences, have become a part of the popular language and are used familiarly without consciousness of their origin.

2. **Spherule:** If you were describing a snow-storm would you use such words as "spherule," "geometric," "pellicle," and "meteor"? Since Whittier had little schooling, are you not surprised that he knew such words? How do you suppose he learned them, and what do they mean?

132, 1. Mound: Attribute complement of "showed." What difference did the snow make in the appearance of familiar objects near the house?

2. **Pisa's leaning miracle:** Seven miles from the mouth of the river Arno in Italy, is the city of Pisa, best known the world over for its strange leaning tower built in 1350. The tower, 179 feet high, is 24 feet off the perpendicular; the cause of the leaning was perhaps an earthquake during the building of the tower, but Prof. W. H. Goodyear of Brooklyn declares that it was built originally as it now stands.

3. **Our father:** The brisk characterization of the father in this poem and the appreciative characterizations of the other members of the household show the absurdity of such sweeping condemnation of Whittier as this by one critic: "His characters, where he introduces such, are commonly abstractions with little of the flesh and blood of real life in them." In "Snow-Bound," at least, Whittier has presented real persons, not abstractions.

4. **Buskins:** Foot-coverings extending half-way to the knee. Several hundred years before Whittier's time, the word buskin was used to describe the high-heeled, thick-soled shoes worn by tragic actors.

5. **Aladdin's wondrous cave:** Old and young, school-boys and learned scholars, enjoy the tales of the Arabian nights.

The one referred to by Whittier tells about the wonderful lamp of Aladdin.

133, 1. **Amun:** Ammon, an Egyptian god often represented as a ram.

2. **Church-bell:** In his autobiographical letter, Whittier says that the sound of the two church-bells of Haverhill could be heard in the lonely homestead on Sundays.

3. **Solitude:** Syntax?

134, 1. **Minded:** Regarded with attention, noticed, observed.

2. **Buried brooklet:** In his prose works Whittier often refers to the little brook that ran near the farmhouse. Here is one of his descriptions: "Our old homestead nestled under a long range of hills which stretched off to the west. It was surrounded by woods in all directions save to the southeast where a break in the leafy wall revealed a vista of low green meadows, picturesque with wooded islands and jutting capes of upland. Through these a small brook, noisy enough as it foamed, rippled, and laughed down its rocky falls by our garden-side, wound, silently and scarcely visible, to a still larger stream, known as the Country Brook. This brook in its turn, after doing duty at two or three saw and grist mills, the clack of which we could hear in still days across the intervening woodlands, found its way to the great river [the Merrimac], and the river took up and bore it down to the great sea [the Atlantic Ocean]." (From "The Fish I Didn't Catch.")

3. **Wooded knolls:** See note **134**, 2.

135, 1. **Crane . . . trammels:** The "crane" was the horizontal arm to which hooks called "trammels" were attached for holding kettles or other vessels over the fire in the open fireplace.

2. **Andirons:** Iron horizontal supports on which the sticks or logs rested. "Andirons" were often wrought out into fantastic shapes, such as heads of Turks.

136, 1. **Clean-winged hearth:** Though familiar to grandfathers of Yankee origin, such expressions as this are entirely

outside the experience of young people of to-day and consequently need explanation. In olden days the wing of a fowl, usually a turkey wing, was placed beside the hearth for brushing back the ashes and keeping the hearth clean.

2. **Frost-line:** Have you ever seen how the fire even in a coal-stove will gradually dissipate the frost on a window-pane?

3. **Silhouette:** In the description of the scene around the hearth, what bookish words and what homely, colloquial words does the poet use? The difficulties of Whittier's vocabulary are caused by the use either of somewhat bookish words or of homely words descriptive of a life fast fading away. It is interesting to collect examples of both kinds of Whittier's words.

4. **Meet:** Suitable. What does this adjective modify?

5. **Brown October's:** A phrase reminiscent of the old ballads of which Whittier was fond.

137, 1. **Thou:** Whittier was a Quaker. See page 21.

2. **Voices of that hearth are still:** Compare note **146**, 1. This tone of memory, this expression of long-gathered emotions, this personal element, makes the poem clearly lyric rather than epic.

3. **Cypress-trees:** Symbols of mourning. The lines might be paraphrased thus: That person is to be pitied who in his mourning cannot see hope beyond in heaven.

138, 1. **Marbles:** Marble monuments in a cemetery.

2. **Sped the time:** Pages 138–153 give the stories told around the fire.

3. "**The chief of Gambia's,**" etc. This line is from a poem by Mrs. Sarah Wentworth Morton, which appeared in Caleb Bingham's *The American Preceptor*, a popular school-book of the time.

4. **Slavery's shaping hand:** Compare page 149. Regarding Whittier's part in the anti-slavery movement, see page 22. A few years after the publication of "Snow-Bound," the poet edited the journal of John Woolman, a Quaker who before

the Revolutionary War wrote quaintly but eloquently against slavery. The italicized lines which Whittier says were like a trumpet call are from a poem by Mrs. Mercy Warren, wife of a Revolutionary patriot of Massachusetts.

5. **Memphremagog:** This lake, the name of which means "beautiful water," lies one-fifth in Vermont and four-fifths in Canada. It is described by Baedeker as enclosed by rocky shores and wooded hills.

6. **Samp:** Coarse hominy. A word like this helps to reproduce the atmosphere of the curious stories of travel told by the father.

7. **St. Francois':** Lake St. Francis is an expansion of the St. Lawrence River. At the bottom of page 138 and the top of page 139 are given the father's memories of his Canadian horseback journey, when he camped with trappers and Indians and enjoyed the life in the French-Canadian villages.

8. **Norman cap and bodiced zone:** Descriptions of the head-gear and dresses of the French-Canadian dancers.

139, 1. **Salisbury's level marshes:** The salt marshes of Salisbury are over the New Hampshire line, but are, like the Isles of Shoals where the father fished, near the Massachusetts farm of the Whittiers.

2. **Swept, scythe, etc.:** An alliterative line.

3. **Boar's Head:** A bluff on the New Hampshire coast, not far from the Whittier farm. The *Isles of Shoals* (see page 25) are nine rocky islands off Boar's Head, frequented as summer resorts because of their pure sea-air and freedom from mosquitoes.

140, 1. **Cochecho town:** The city of Dover, New Hampshire, settled in 1623, lies on the Cocheco River.

2. **She made us welcome:** That is, she told the hearth-side group all about her early home. What lines give the mother's contribution to the talk? What idea do you form in your mind of the appearance and characteristics of the mother?

3. **Piscataqua:** A New Hampshire river.

141, 1. Some tale she gave: Compare the nature of the tales told by the mother with those told by the father.

2. **Sewel's ancient tome:** William Sewel was a Dutch Quaker whose *History of the Quakers* was translated into English and several times reprinted.

3. **Faith fire-winged:** In the early days of the Quaker faith in England and the colonies, large numbers of its adherents were burned to death or hanged.

4. **Chalkley's Journal, old and quaint:** Thomas Chalkley was a Quaker preacher who was born in 1675. The greater part of his life he spent in traveling about New England and the southern colonies preaching. The quaint character of his *Journal*, published in his seventy-second year, is evident in the following extract: "To stop their murmuring, I told them they should not need to cast lots, which was usual in such cases, which of us should die first, for I would freely offer up my life to do them good. One said, 'God bless you! I will not eat any of you.' Another said he would die before he would eat any of me, and so said several. I can truly say, on that occasion, at that time, my life was not dear to me, and that I was serious and ingenuous in my proposition; and as I was leaning over the side of the vessel, thoughtfully considering my proposal to the company, and looking in my mind to Him that made me, a very large dolphin came up towards the top or surface of the water and looked me in the face; and I called the people to put a hook into the sea and take him, for here is one come to redeem me (I said to them). And they put a hook into the sea, and the fish readily took it, and they caught him. He was longer than myself. I think he was about six feet long, and the largest that ever I saw. This plainly showed us that we ought not to distrust the providence of the Almighty. The people were quieted by this act of Providence, and murmured no more. We caught enough to eat plentifully of till we got into the capes of Delaware."

5. **Offered:** The subject is "Who," six lines above.

6. **Child of Abraham**: Consult *Genesis* xxii, 13.

7. **Our uncle**: How do the tales told by the uncle differ from those told by the mother and father?

142, 1. **Lyceum**: Characteristic of the era in New England was the lyceum, a building or an association for the teaching of the people by public lectures. Many persons who had scanty opportunities for schooling were able to acquire a fair education by attendance at the lyceum and by reading. Whittier himself thus gained much. In his later years he became an enthusiastic patron of the Amesbury Lyceum; there such men as Beecher and Phillips lectured at his invitation. In recognition of his attainments he received, the year of the publication of "Snow-Bound," the Harvard honorary degree of Doctor of Laws, and three years later, in 1869, was made a trustee of Brown University.

2. **Apollonius**: Apollonius of Tyana was regarded as a worker of miracles. He lived in the time of Christ.

3. **Hermes**: Compare Milton's lyric, "Il Penseroso." Hermes Trismegistus was an Egyptian philosopher who lived in Alexandria early in the Christian era. He is said to have invented the art of writing in hieroglyphics.

4. **White of Selborne**: Gilbert White, author of *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne*, is said by the poet to have magnified the Surrey hills of southern England just as the simple, guileless uncle magnified the common features of his immediate neighborhood in northeastern Massachusetts.

143, 1. **The dear aunt**: The verb for this subject is found in the first line of page 144. What was the character of the aunt? How do you picture her personal appearance? Miss Hussey had the reputation of making the best squash pies that were ever baked.

144, 1. **Warp of circumstance**: In "Snow-Bound," Whittier himself weaves through the warp of circumstantial details of his home life something of the woof-thread of poetical romance. The details do not seem merely petty

and commonplace, but through the spirit of the writer become invested with poetic sentiment and charm. In the history of literature, Whittier belongs to the great world-movement spoken of on page 27, his first model being a leader in that movement, Robert Burns. Whittier's particular part in the movement, as exemplified in his "Snow-Bound," is that of the accurate, sensible observer of rustic life. In contrast to Longfellow, who is the cultured library poet, Whittier stands for specificness and accuracy of homely observation. Whittier's minuteness of detail is admirably suggested by his own phrase on page 159 when he speaks of his poem as containing "Flemish pictures of old days." The Flemish artists were distinguished by their attention to minute detail. In the particular phase of literature known as American, Whittier is one of the chief writers of the group of New England poets who, about the time of the publication of his first poem, entered upon a long period of literary supremacy in America.

2. **But:** Part of speech?

3. **Beside:** What other examples do you notice of prepositions following their objects?

145, 1. Never outward swings: It is a beautiful, pathetic figure of speech by which the poet thus refers to the death of his elder sister.

2. **Motley-braided:** Braided in many colors, like the old-fashioned rag carpets still to be seen in some country districts. Note that Whittier uses few hyphenated adjectives, in contrast to Tennyson, for instance, in his *Idylls of the King.*

3. **One little year ago:** Whittier's younger sister died in 1864, the year before he wrote the poem.

146, 1. A loss in all familiar things: In his biography of Whittier, George R. Carpenter refers to the memory mood in which the poem was written: "It was an old man, tender-hearted, who thus drew the portraits of the circle of which he and his brother alone survived. The mood was one of wistful and reverential piety — the thoughtful farmer's

mood, in many a land, under many a religion, recalling the ancient scenes more clearly as his memory for recent things grows less secure, living with fond regret the departed days, yearning for friends long vanished. Our changed national life, the passing away of the old agricultural conditions, the breaking up of ancient traditions, has made this wistful and reverential mood a constant element in our recent literature. In poems and novels we have delighted to reconstruct the past, as the Arab-singers before Mohammed began their lays with the contemplation of a deserted camping-ground. It was Whittier that introduced the new theme, best described in the closing lines of his own poem."

147, 1. **Master of the district school:** Compare Goldsmith's village schoolmaster in "The Deserted Village." It is said that William Haskell, the schoolmaster of Whittier's poem, never knew that he had been described in the poem.

2. **Experience:** One of the subjects of the verb "made," on page 148.

148, 1. **Rustic party:** Are the three games mentioned still played at parties?

2. **Pindus-born Arachthus:** The Arachthus is one of five rivers which rise in Pindus, the great mountain-chain of Greece.

3. **Olympus:** The Grecian mountain on the top of which the gods were said to dwell. Like Charles Lamb, also lacking college education, Whittier is even fonder of classical allusions than the college trained Longfellow.

149, 1. **Plant:** This is one of the verbs in the series beginning "shall . . . assail," whose subject is "Who."

2. **Another guest:** Harriet, daughter of Judge Livermore, of New Hampshire, a woman of great abilities and peculiarities. She was once an independent missionary to the western Indians, whom she believed to be the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel. At another time she went about proclaiming the second coming of Christ (see page 151). Her travels are not exaggerated by the poet.

150, 1. Heat-lightnings: A bold metaphor.

2. **Petruchio's Kate:** In *The Taming of the Shrew* by Shakespeare.

3. **Siena's saint:** St. Catherine.

151, 1. Crazy Queen of Lebanon: Lady Hester Stanhope, daughter of the third Earl Stanhope. She was the most trusted confidante of her uncle, William Pitt; on his death she received a royal pension of £1200 a year. Becoming disgusted with society life, she retired for a while into Wales, and in 1810 left England to wander about until her death in 1829 among the half savage people of Mount Lebanon. Harriet Livermore lived with her for a time until the two quarreled "in regard to two white horses with red marks on their backs which suggested the idea of saddles," on which Lady Stanhope expected to ride into Jerusalem with the Lord.

152, 1. But He, etc.: The meaning is as follows: But He who understands our physical limitations is just, merciful, and compassionate; and the words, He remembers we are dust, are full of sweet assurances and hope for all of us.

153, 1. At last: Note the transition phrase. Having gathered the family around the hearth and given us their stories and pictures, the poet breaks up his family circle with the dying of the fire, that evening.

156, 1. Quaker matron's inward light: The Quakers believed that within themselves there burned a light from God which should guide each one independently in his daily acts.

2. **Calvin's creed:** Born in 1509, John Calvin spent most of his life in Geneva, Switzerland, preaching certain specific religious doctrines which came to be called Calvinism: 1. Particular Election; 2. Particular Redemption; 3. Moral inability in a fallen state; 4. Irresistible grace; 5. Final perseverance. The Puritans were rigid Calvinists, stern and austere in their beliefs, but stirred by an intensely ideal, imaginative faith.

3. **Acid sect:** See page 24 for light on Whittier's breadth of sympathy.

4. **Scarce a score:** Probably no American poet had fewer books in boyhood than Whittier. At home he had access to a few miscellaneous volumes, mostly sermons, tracts, biographies, or journals of famous Quakers. He and his sister read at night by candles one of the Waverley novels. The book of poetry referred to four lines below was an epic poem, *Davideis*, by the Quaker poet, Thomas Elwood, a friend of John Milton's. In his autobiographical letter Whittier says that as a boy he was a close student of the Bible.

5. **The heathen Nine:** The nine muses.

6. **Village paper:** Whittier's description of the general contents of the village paper of his boyhood needs explanation with regard to several points. The "painted Creeks" referred to on page 157 were the Creek Indians at that time being removed from Georgia and driven beyond the Mississippi. "Daft McGregor" was Sir Gregor McGregor who was attempting to found a colony in Costa Rica. "Taygetus" was a mountain of Greece. "Ypsilanti's Mainote Greeks" were inhabitants of the mountainous district of Maina, in the Greek province of Laconia. The Mainotes, pronounced mī-nōts, were a wild, brave people who, under the leadership of Ypsilanti, were prominent in the long war for freedom from the Turks. "Vendue sales," page 157, were sales at auction, still common in the central part of New York state under the name "vandoo." The point of the whole description is in the fifth from the last line on page 157, where the word "embargo" means restraint, and where it is suggested that the village newspaper broke the bounds of the snow and let the thoughts of the household move out across the world.

The interest that Whittier had in the local paper after he was nineteen was often greatly increased by his seeing his poems in print. It is said that the first newspaper containing a poem of his was thrown to him in the field where he was working with his uncle.

159, 1. Truce of God: An allusion to a formal cessation of baronial petty warfare in the middle ages. The church

forbade any baron to attack another between sunset on Wednesday and sunrise on the following Monday. The point of the allusion is that the poet hopes that the worldly man's eyes in some reminiscent moment when he has broken loose from the struggle of life shall grow wet with tears as he thinks of his boyhood winter joys.

2. **Thanks untraced:** The last twenty lines of "Snow-Bound" beautifully convey the poet's idea of the mission and the reception of his poem.

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

I. THE RAVEN

1. Relate briefly in simple prose the contents of the entire poem.

2. What are the merits of Poe's poetry compared with your prose?

3. Try your hand at imitating Poe in a stanza of your own.

4. Comparison of Poe's "Raven" with Wordsworth's "Green Linnet," Shelley's "To a Skylark," Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," or any other lyric which you particularly enjoy.

5. The circumstances of the composition of "The Raven."

6. Just what were the actions of the person who is in this poem telling his strange experience?

7. What were the actions of the bird?

8. What are your feelings when you finish reading the poem aloud?

9. Knowing something about Poe, Longfellow, and Whittier, could you guess which one of the three must have written "The Raven?" Reasons.

10. What makes the poem fascinating?

11. Strange or uncanny experiences of your own.

12. Contrast the metrical form of this poem with that of the other two poems printed in this book.

13. Poe's place in literature.

14. Comparison of the language and the sentence

structure of Poe, Longfellow, and Whittier as seen in these three representative American poems.

II. THE COURTSHIP OF MILES STANDISH

1. In a common history of the United States or in an encyclopedia, read the account of Massachusetts colonial life, and compare it with Longfellow's poem, in contents and form.

2. Condense the entire poem into a single narrative paragraph of about one hundred and fifty words, using as topic sentence a statement of the theme of the poem.

3. As an exercise in the evaluation of words, add to your paragraph or subtract from it so as to make it precisely one hundred and fifty words long.

4. From what you have read of Longfellow's life and works, do you think he might have made a successful novel out of the material contained in this poem, if he had tried? Give reasons for your answer.

5. The courtship in some novel that you have read contrasted with that related in the poem.

6. A courtship as disclosed in a package of old letters or in a dozen souvenir postal cards.

7. (*a.*) Character studies in the poem.

(*b.*) Do Miles Standish, John Alden, and Priscilla seem like real persons?

8. Describe the house in which Standish lived. Supplement by your imagination the details of the poem.

9. Describe the Captain.

10. After reading Part I aloud, would you prefer to read the rest of the story in poetry or in prose? Reasons.

11. The picture that is in your mind of the scene between Alden and Priscilla in Part III.

12. Could you keep your face straight while you were reading of the proposal? Why or why not?

13. Do the girls like this part of the poem best?

14. Do the boys prefer Part IV to Part III?

15. Are you more interested in the descriptions or in the exciting passages? Why?

16. Do you enjoy reading aloud any part of the poem?

17. Describe Alden's new habitation.

18. Would you omit any of the lines of the poem? If so, which?

19. Describe the wedding procession.

20. Write nine sentences each containing in your own words the substance of one of the parts of the poem.

21. Imaginary account of the courtship of Miles Standish and Rose.

22. Indian stories that you know.

23. Narratives of several battles.

24. Accounts of pioneer life.

25. A wedding.

26. What makes Longfellow's poem more interesting than Poe's?

27. The place of "The Courtship of Miles Standish" in the history of literature.

III. SNOW-BOUND

1. Early nineteenth century farm life of New England.

2. What do your grandparents say about the truthfulness of the picture given in Whittier's winter idyl?

3. The meaning of *idyl.*

4. Even though you have never lived on a farm, can you appreciate and enjoy Whittier's poem?

5. If you have lived on a farm, are you prepared to say that the poem seems true to life?

6. The family described in "Snow-Bound."

7. Nine pictures of real persons.

8. Description of the storm, of the barn, of the house, and of the scenes outside the house.

9. Description of a snow-storm that has kept you from school.

10. Experiences sliding down straw-stacks, leaping from beams in the barn into the haymow, trying to milk cows or do other farm chores.

11. Description of a fine new hip-roofed barn.

12. A lonely farmhouse in winter.

13. Summer scenes on a farm that you have visited.

14. Winter and summer in the city.

15. Explain how to build a furnace fire, or how to cut kindling, or how to keep from being run over.

16. The relative advantages of city and country life.

17. Chores of a city boy.

18. Life in a city apartment or flat contrasted with the boyhood life of Whittier.

19. State in a few words the theme of "Snow-Bound," and then in one paragraph write a well-proportioned summary of the entire poem.

20. Whittier's life as a reformer and poet.

21. Whom do you admire the most, — Poe, Longfellow, or Whittier? Why?

22. On comparing Whittier's "Snow-Bound" and Emerson's "Snow-Storm," what difference do you observe in the metrical form and in the contents?

23. Using your imagination to fill out the details, give as vividly as you can, with gestures if they will help, the full picture that is in your mind of the persons gathered around the hearth in the evening. Do not tell any of the conversation, simply describe the scene at some moment.

24. The fireside conversation.

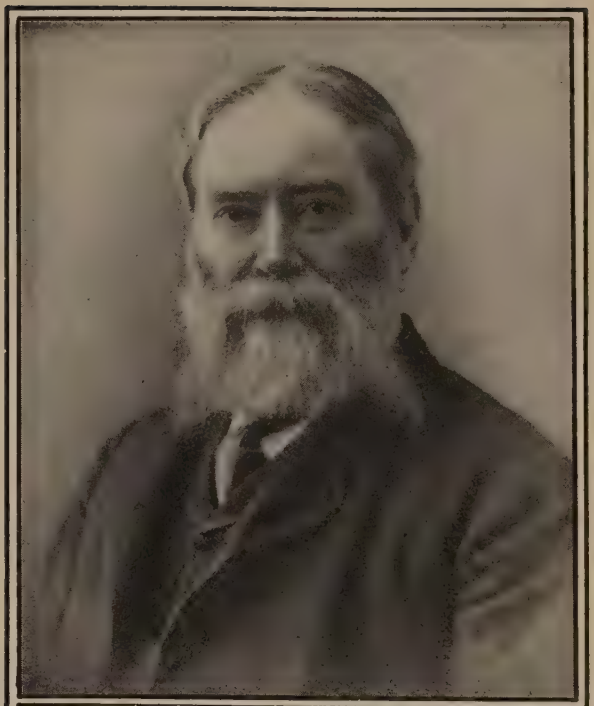
25. Name six American and six English political and literary contemporaries of Whittier.

26. The characteristics of the literary era to which Whittier belonged. (See page 27.)

27. Do you like "Snow-Bound" better than either "The Raven" or "The Courtship of Miles Standish"? Reasons.

PART TWO

LOWELL



JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

INTRODUCTION

LIFE OF LOWELL

In Cambridge there are two literary shrines to which visitors are sure to find their way soon after passing the Harvard gates, "Craigie House," the home of Longfellow and "Elmwood," the home of Lowell. Though their hallowed retirement has been profaned by the encroachments of the growing city, yet in their simple dignity these fine old colonial mansions still bespeak the noble associations of the past, and stand as memorials of the finest products of American culture.

Elmwood was built before the Revolution by Thomas Oliver, the Tory governor, who signed his abdication at the invitation of a committee of "about four thousand people" who surrounded his house at Cambridge. The property was confiscated by the Commonwealth and used by the American army during the war. In 1818 it was purchased by the Rev. Charles Lowell, pastor of the West Congregational Church in Boston, and after ninety years it is still the family home. Here was born, February 22, 1819, James Russell Lowell, with surroundings most propitious for the nurturing of a poet-soul. Within the stately home there was a refined family life; the father had profited by the unusual privilege of three years' study abroad, and his library of some four thousand volumes was not limited to theology; the mother, whose maiden name was Spence and who traced her Scotch ancestry back to the hero of the ballad of *Sir Patrick Spens*, taught her children the good old ballads

and the romantic stories in the *Fairie Queen*, and it was one of the poet's earliest delights to recount the adventures of Spenser's heroes and heroines to his playmates.

An equally important influence upon his early youth was the out-of-door life at Elmwood. To the love of nature his soul was early dedicated, and no American poet has more truthfully and beautifully interpreted the inspired teachings of nature, whispered through the solemn tree-tops or caroled by the happy birds. The open fields surrounding Elmwood and the farms for miles around were his familiar playground, and furnished daily adventures for his curious and eager mind. The mere delight of this experience with nature, he says, "made my childhood the richest part of my life. It seems to me as if I had never seen nature again since those old days when the balancing of a yellow butterfly over a thistle bloom was spiritual food and lodging for a whole forenoon." In the *Cathedral* is an autobiographic passage describing in a series of charming pictures some of those choice hours of childhood:

> " One summer hour abides, what time I perched,
> Dappled with noonday, under simmering leaves,
> And pulled the pulpy oxhearts, while aloof
> An oriole clattered and the robins shrilled,
> Denouncing me an alien and a thief."

Quite like other boys Lowell was subjected to the processes of the more formal education of books. He was first sent to a "dame school," and then to the private school of William Wells, under whose rigid tuition he became thoroughly grounded in the classics. Among his schoolfellows was W. W. Story, the poet-sculptor, who continued his life-long friend. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, who was one of the younger boys of the school, recalls the high talk of Story and Lowell about the *Fairie Queen*. At fifteen he entered Harvard College, then an

institution with about two hundred students. The course of study in those days was narrow and dull, a pretty steady diet of Greek, Latin and Mathematics, with an occasional dessert of Paley's *Evidences of Christianity* or Butler's *Analogy*. Lowell was not distinguished for scholarship, but he read omnivorously and wrote copiously, often in smooth flowing verse, fashioned after the accepted English models of the period. He was an editor of *Harvardiana*, the college magazine, and was elected class poet in his senior year. But his habit of lounging with the poets in the secluded alcoves of the old library, in preference to attending recitations, finally became too scandalous for official forbearance, and he was rusticated, "on account of constant neglect of his college duties," as the faculty records state. He was sent to Concord, where his exile was not without mitigating profit, as he became acquainted with Emerson and Thoreau. Here he wrote the class poem, which he was permitted to circulate in print at his Commencement. This production, which now stands at the head of the list of his published works, was curiously unprophetic of his later tendencies. It was written in the neatly polished couplets of the Pope type and other imitative metres, and aimed to satirize the radical movements of the period, especially the transcendentalists and abolitionists, with both of whom he was soon to be in active sympathy.

Lowell's first two years out of college were troubled with rather more than the usual doubts and questionings that attend a young man's choice of a profession. He studied for a bachelor's degree in law, which he obtained in two years. But the work was done reluctantly. Law books, he says, "I am reading with as few wry faces as I may." Though he was nominally practicing law for two years, there is no evidence that he ever had a client, except the fictitious one so pleasantly described in his first magazine article, entitled *My First Client.*

From Coke and Blackstone his mind would inevitably slip away to hold more congenial communion with the poets. He became intensely interested in the old English dramatists, an interest that resulted in his first series of literary articles, *The Old English Dramatists,* published in the *Boston Miscellany.* The favor with which these articles were received increased, he writes, the "hope of being able one day to support myself by my pen, and to leave a calling which I hate, and for which I am not *well* fitted, to say the least."

During this struggle between law and literature an influence came into Lowell's life that settled his purposes, directed his aspirations and essentially determined his career. In 1839 he writes to a friend about a "very pleasant young lady," who "knows more poetry than any one I am acquainted with." This pleasant young lady was Maria White, who became his wife in 1844. The loves of this young couple constitute one of the most pleasing episodes in the history of our literature, idyllic in its simple beauty and inspiring in its spiritual perfectness. "Miss White was a woman of unusual loveliness," says Mr. Norton, "and of gifts of mind and heart still more unusual, which enabled her to enter with complete sympathy into her lover's intellectual life and to direct his genius to its highest aims." She was herself a poet, and a little volume of her poems published privately after her death is an evidence of her refined intellectual gifts and lofty spirit.

In 1841 Lowell published his first collection of poems, entitled *A Year's Life.* The volume was dedicated to "Una," a veiled admission of indebtedness for its inspiration to Miss White. Two poems particularly, *Irene* and *My Love,* and the best in the volume, are rapturous expressions of his new inspiration. In later years he referred to the collection as "poor windfalls of unripe experience." Only nine of the sixty-eight poems were

preserved in subsequent collections. In 1843, with a young friend, Robert Carter, Lowell launched a new magazine, *The Pioneer*, with the high purpose, as the prospectus stated, of giving the public "a rational substitute" for the "namby-pamby love tales and sketches monthly poured out to them by many of our popular magazines." These young reformers did not know how strongly the great reading public is attached to its literary flesh-pots, and so the *Pioneer* proved itself too good to live in just three months. The result of the venture to Lowell was an interesting lesson in editorial work and a debt of eighteen hundred dollars. His next venture was a second volume of *Poems*, issued in 1844, in which the permanent lines of his poetic development appear more clearly than in *A Year's Life*. The tone of the first volume was uniformly serious, but in the second his muse's face begins to brighten with the occasional play of wit and humor. The volume was heartily praised by the critics and his reputation as a new poet of convincing distinction was established. In the following year appeared *Conversations on Some of the Old Poets*, a volume of literary criticism interesting now mainly as pointing to maturer work in this field.

It is generally stated that the influence of Maria White made Lowell an Abolitionist, but this is only qualifiedly true. A year before he had met her he wrote to a friend: "The Abolitionists are the only ones with whom I sympathize of the present extant parties." Freedom, justice, humanitarianism were fundamental to his native idealism. Maria White's enthusiasm and devotion to the cause served to crystallize his sentiments and to stimulate him to a practical participation in the movement. Both wrote for the *Liberty Bell*, an annual published in the interests of the anti-slavery agitation. Immediately after their marriage they went to Philadelphia where Lowell for a time was an editorial writer

for the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, an anti-slavery journal once edited by Whittier. During the next six years he was a regular contributor to the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, published in New York. In all of this prose writing Lowell exhibited the ardent spirit of the reformer, although he never adopted the extreme views of Garrison and others of the ultra-radical wing of the party.

But Lowell's greatest contribution to the anti-slavery cause was the *Biglow Papers*, a series of satirical poems in the Yankee dialect, aimed at the politicians who were responsible for the Mexican War, a war undertaken, as he believed, in the interests of the Southern slaveholders. Hitherto the Abolitionists had been regarded with contempt by the conservative, complacent advocates of peace and "compromise," and to join them was essentially to lose caste in the best society. But now a laughing prophet had arisen whose tongue was tipped with fire. The *Biglow Papers* was an unexpected blow to the slave power. Never before had humor been used directly as a weapon in political warfare. Soon the whole country was ringing with the homely phrases of Hosea Biglow's satiric humor, and deriding conservatism began to change countenance. "No speech, no plea, no appeal," says George William Curtis, "was comparable in popular and permanent effect with this pitiless tempest of fire and hail, in the form of wit, argument, satire, knowledge, insight, learning, common-sense, and patriotism. It was humor of the purest strain, but humor in deadly earnest." As an embodiment of the elemental Yankee character and speech it is a classic of final authority. Says Curtis, "Burns did not give to the Scotch tongue a nobler immortality than Lowell gave to the dialect of New England."

The year 1848 was one of remarkably productive results for Lowell. Besides the *Biglow Papers* and some forty magazine articles and poems, he published a third

collection of *Poems*, the *Vision of Sir Launfal*, and the *Fable for Critics*. The various phases of his composite genius were nearly all represented in these volumes. The *Fable* was a good-natured satire upon his fellow authors, in which he touched up in rollicking rhymed couplets the merits and weaknesses of each, not omitting himself, with witty characterization and acute critical judgment; and it is still read for its delicious humor and sterling criticism. For example, the lines on Poe will always be quoted:

"There comes Poe, with his raven, like Barnaby Rudge,
Three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge."

And so the sketch of Hawthorne:

"There is Hawthorne, with genius so shrinking and rare
That you hardly at first see the strength that is there;
A frame so robust, with a nature so sweet,
So earnest, so graceful, so lithe and so fleet,
Is worth a descent from Olympus to meet."

Lowell was now living in happy content at Elmwood. His father, whom he once speaks of as a "Dr. Primrose in the comparative degree," had lost a large portion of his property, and literary journals in those days sent very small checks to young authors. So humble frugality was an attendant upon the high thinking of the poet couple, but this did not matter, since the richest objects of their ideal world could be had without price. But clouds suddenly gathered over their beautiful lives. Four children were born, three of whom died in infancy. Lowell's deep and lasting grief for his first-born is tenderly recorded in the poems *She Came and Went* and the *First Snow-Fall*. The volume of poems published in 1848 was "reverently dedicated" to the memory of "our little Blanche," and in the introductory poem addressed "To

M. W. L." he poured forth his sorrow like a libation of tears:

> "I thought our love at full, but I did err;
> Joy's wreath drooped o'er mine eyes; I could not see
> That sorrow in our happy world must be
> Love's deepest spokesman and interpreter."

The year 1851–52 was spent abroad for the benefit of Mrs. Lowell's health, which was now precarious. At Rome their little son Walter died, and one year after their return to Elmwood sorrow's crown of sorrow came to the poet in the death of Mrs. Lowell, October, 1853. For years after the dear old home was to him *The Dead House*, as he wrote of it:

> "For it died that autumn morning
> When she, its soul, was borne
> To lie all dark on the hillside
> That looks over woodland and corn."

Before 1854 Lowell's literary success had been won mainly in verse. With the appearance in the magazines of *A Moosehead Journal*, *Fireside Travels*, and *Leaves from My Italian Journal* his success as a prose essayist began. Henceforth, and against his will, his prose was a stronger literary force than his poetry. He now gave a course of lectures on the English poets at the Lowell Institute, and during the progress of these lectures he received notice of his appointment to succeed Longfellow in the professorship of the French and Spanish languages and Belles-Lettres in Harvard College. A year was spent in Europe in preparation for his new work, and during the next twenty years he faithfully performed the duties of the professorship, pouring forth the ripening fruits of his varied studies in lectures such as it is not often the privilege of college students to hear. That pulling

in the yoke of this steady occupation was sometimes galling is shown in his private letters. To W. D. Howells he wrote regretfully of the time and energy given to teaching, and of his conviction that he would have been a better poet if he "had not estranged the muse by donning a professor's gown." But a good teacher always bears in his left hand the lamp of sacrifice.

In 1857 Lowell was married to Miss Frances Dunlap, "a woman of remarkable gifts and grace of person and character," says Charles Eliot Norton. In the same year the *Atlantic Monthly* was launched and Lowell became its first editor. This position he held four years. Under his painstaking and wise management the magazine quickly became what it has continued to be, the finest representative of true literature among periodicals. In 1864 he joined his friend, Professor Norton, in the editorship of the *North American Review*, to which he gave much of the distinction for which this periodical was once so worthily famous. In this first appeared his masterly essays on the great poets, Chaucer, Dante, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, and the others, which were gathered into the three volumes, *Among My Books*, first and second series, and *My Study Windows*. Variety was given to this critical writing by such charming essays as *A Good Word for Winter* and the deliciously caustic paper *On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners*.

One of the strongest elements of Lowell's character was patriotism. His love of country and his native soil was not merely a principle, it was a passion. No American author has done so much to enlarge and exalt the ideals of democracy. An intense interest in the welfare of the nation broadened the scope of his literary work and led him at times into active public life. During the Civil War he published a second series of *Biglow Papers*, in which, says Mr. Greenslet, "we feel the vital stirring of the mind of Lowell as it was moved by the great war:

and if they never had quite the popular reverberation of the first series, they made deeper impression, and are a more priceless possession of our literature." When peace was declared in April, 1865, he wrote to Professor Norton: "The news, my dear Charles, is from Heaven. I felt a strange and tender exaltation. I wanted to laugh and I wanted to cry, and ended by holding my peace and feeling devoutly thankful. There is something magnificent in having a country to love." On July 21 a solemn service was held at Harvard College in memory of her sons who had died in the war, in which Lowell gave the *Commemoration Ode*, a poem which is now regarded, not as popular, but as marking the highest reach of his poetic power. The famous passage characterizing Lincoln is unquestionably the finest tribute ever paid to Lincoln by an American author.

In the presidential campaign of 1876 Lowell was active, making speeches, serving as delegate to the Republican Convention, and later as Presidential Elector. There was even much talk of sending him to Congress. Through the friendly offices of Mr. Howells, who was in intimate personal relations with President Hayes, he was appointed Minister to Spain. This honor was the more gratifying to him because he had long been devoted to the Spanish literature and language, and he could now read his beloved Calderon with new joys. In 1880 he was promoted to the English mission, and during the next four years represented his country at the Court of St. James in a manner that raised him to the highest point of honor and esteem in both nations. His career in England was an extraordinary, in most respects an unparalleled success. He was our first official representative to win completely the heart of the English people, and a great part of his permanent achievement was to establish more cordial relations between the two countries. His literary reputation had prepared the ground

for his personal popularity. He was greeted as "His Excellency the Ambassador of American Literature to the Court of Shakespeare." His fascinating personality won friends in every circle of society. Queen Victoria declared that during her long reign no ambassador had created so much interest or won so much regard. He had already been honored by degrees from Oxford and Cambridge, and now many similar honors were thrust upon him. He was acknowledged to be the best after-dinner speaker in England, and no one was called upon so often for addresses at dedications, the unveiling of tablets, and other civic occasions. It is not strange that he became attached to England with an increasing affection, but there was no diminution of his intense Americanism. His celebrated Birmingham address on *Democracy* is yet our clearest and noblest exposition of American political principles and ideals.

With the inauguration of Cleveland in 1885 Lowell's official residence in England came to an end. He returned to America and for a time lived with his daughter at Deerfoot Farm. Mrs. Lowell had died in England, and he could not carry his sorrow back to Elmwood alone. He now leisurely occupied himself with literary work, making an occasional address upon literature or politics, which was always distinguished by grace and dignity of style and richness of thought.

In November, 1886, he delivered the oration at the 250th anniversary of the founding of Harvard University, and, rising to the requirements of this notable occasion, he captivated his hearers, among whom were many distinguished delegates from the great universities of Europe as well as of America, by the power of his thought and the felicity of his expression.

During the period of his diplomatic service he added almost nothing to his permanent literary product. In 1869 he had published *Under the Willows*, a collection

that contains some of his finest poems. In the same year *The Cathedral* was published, a stately poem in blank verse, profound in thought, with many passages of great poetic beauty. In 1888 a final collection of poems was published, entitled *Heartsease and Rue,* which opened with the memorial poem, *Agassiz,* an elegy that would not be too highly honored by being bound in a golden volume with *Lycidas, Adonais* and *Thyrsis.* Going back to his earliest literary studies, he again (1887) lectured at the Lowell Institute on the old dramatists. Occasionally he gave a poem to the magazines and a collection of these *Last Poems* was made in 1895 by Professor Norton. During these years were written many of the charming *Letters* to personal friends, which rank with the finest literary letters ever printed and must always be regarded as an important part of his prose works.

It was a gracious boon of providence that Lowell was permitted to spend his last years at Elmwood, with his daughter, Mrs. Burnett, and his grandchildren. There again, as in the early days, he watched the orioles building their nests and listened to the tricksy catbird's call. To an English friend he writes: "I watch the moon rise behind the same trees through which I first saw it seventy years ago and have a strange feeling of permanence, as if I should watch it seventy years longer." In the old library by the familiar fireplace he sat, when the shadows were playing among his beloved books, communing with the beautiful past. What unwritten poems of pathos and sweetness may have ministered to his great soul we cannot know. In 1890 a fatal disease came upon him, and after long and heroic endurance of pain he died, August 12, 1891, and under the trees of Mt. Auburn he rests, as in life still near his great neighbor Longfellow. In a memorial poem Oliver Wendell Holmes spoke for the thousands who mourned:

"Peace to thy slumber in the forest shade,
Poet and patriot, every gift was thine;
Thy name shall live while summers bloom and fade
And grateful memory guard thy leafy shrine."

Lowell's rich and varied personality presents a type of cultured manhood that is the finest product of American democracy. The largeness of his interests and the versatility of his intellectual powers give him a unique eminence among American authors. His genius was undoubtedly embarrassed by the diffusive tendency of his interests. He might have been a greater poet had he been less the reformer and statesman, and his creative impulses were often absorbed in the mere enjoyment of exercising his critical faculty. Although he achieved only a qualified eminence as poet, or as prose writer, yet because of the breadth and variety of his permanent achievement he must be regarded as our greatest man of letters. His sympathetic interest, always outflowing toward concrete humanity, was a quality—

"With such large range as from the ale-house bench
Can reach the stars and be with both at home."

With marvelous versatility and equal ease he could talk with the down-east farmer and salty seamen and exchange elegant compliments with old world royalty. In *The Cathedral* he says significantly:

"I thank benignant nature most for this, —
A force of sympathy, or call it lack
Of character firm-planted, loosing me
From the pent chamber of habitual self
To dwell enlarged in alien modes of thought,
Haply distasteful, wholesomer for that,
And through imagination to possess,
As they were mine, the lives of other men."

In the delightful little poem, *The Nightingale in the Study*, we have a fanciful expression of the conflict between Lowell's love of books and love of nature. His friend the catbird calls him "out beneath the unmastered sky," where the buttercups "brim with wine beyond all Lesbian juice." But there are ampler skies, he answers, "in Fancy's land," and the singers though dead so long —

> "Give its best sweetness to all song,
> To nature's self her better glory."

His love of reading is manifest in all his work, giving to his style a bookishness that is sometimes excessive and often troublesome. His expression, though generally direct and clear, and happily colored by personal frankness, is often burdened with learning. To be able to read his essays with full appreciation is in itself evidence of a liberal education. His scholarship was broad and profound, but it was not scholarship in the German sense, exhaustive and exhausting. He studied for the joy of knowing, never for the purpose of being known, and he cared more to know the spirit and meaning of things than to know their causes and origins. A language he learned for the sake of its literature rather than its philology. As Mr. Brownell observes, he shows little interest in the large movements of the world's history. He seemed to prefer history as sublimated in the poet's song. The field of *belles-lettres* was his native province; its atmosphere was most congenial to his tastes. In book-land it was always June for him —

> "Springtime ne'er denied
> Indoors by vernal Chaucer, whose fresh woods
> Throb thick with merle and mavis all the year."

But books could never divert his soul from its early endearments with out-of-door nature. "The older I

grow," he says, "the more I am convinced that there are no satisfactions so deep and so permanent as our sympathies with outward nature." And in the preface to *My Study Windows* he speaks of himself as "one who has always found his most fruitful study in the open air." The most charming element of his poetry is the nature element that everywhere cheers and stimulates the reader. It is full of sunshine and bird music. So genuine, spontaneous and sympathetic are his descriptions that we feel the very heart throbs of nature in his verse, and in the prose of such records of intimacies with outdoor friends as the essay, *My Garden Acquaintance.* "How I do love the earth," he exclaims. "I feel it thrill under my feet. I feel somehow as if it were conscious of my love, as if something passed into my dancing blood from it." It is this sensitive nearness to nature that makes him a better interpreter of her "visible forms" than Bryant even; moreover, unlike Bryant he always catches the notes of joy in nature's voices and feels the uplift of a happy inspiration.

In the presence of the immense popularity of Mark Twain, it may seem paradoxical to call Lowell our greatest American humorist. Yet in the refined and artistic qualities of humorous writing and in the genuineness of the native flavor his work is certainly superior to any other humorous writing that is likely to compete with it for permanent interest. Indeed, Mr. Greenslet thinks that "it is as the author of the *Biglow Papers* that he is likely to be longest remembered." The perpetual play of humor gave to his work, even to the last, the freshness of youth. We love him for his boyish love of pure fun. The two large volumes of his *Letters* are delicious reading because he put into them "good wholesome nonsense," as he says, "keeping my seriousness to bore myself with."

But this sparkling and overflowing humor never ob-

scures the deep seriousness that is the undercurrent of all his writing. A high idealism characterizes all his work. One of his greatest services to his country was the effort to create a saner and sounder political life. As he himself realized, he often moralized his work too much with a purposeful idealism. In middle life he said, "I shall never be a poet until I get out of the pulpit, and New England was all meeting-house when I was growing up." In religion and philosophy he was conservative, deprecating the radical and scientific tendencies of the age, with its knife and glass —

> "That make thought physical and thrust far off
> The Heaven, so neighborly with man of old."

The moral impulse and the poetic impulse were often in conflict, and much of his early poetry for this reason was condemned by his later judgment. His maturer poems are filled with deep-thoughted lines, phrases of high aspiration and soul-stirring ecstasies. Though his thought is spiritual and ideal, it is always firmly rooted in the experience of common humanity. All can climb the heights with him and catch inspiring glimpses at least of the ideal and the infinite.

CRITICAL APPRECIATIONS

"The proportion of his poetry that can be so called is small. But a great deal of it is very fine, very noble, and at times very beautiful, and it discloses the distinctly poetic faculty of which rhythmic and figurative is native expression. It is impressionable rather than imaginative in the large sense; it is felicitous in detail rather than in design; and of a general rather than individual, a representative rather than original, inspiration. There is a field of poetry, assuredly not the highest, but

ample and admirable — in which these qualities, more or less unsatisfactory in prose, are legitimately and fruitfully exercised. All poetry is in the realm of feeling, and thus less exclusively dependent on the thought that is the sole reliance of prose. Being genuine poetry, Lowell's profits by this advantage. Feeling is fitly, genuinely, its inspiration. Its range and limitations correspond to the character of his susceptibility, as those of his prose do to that of his thought. The fusion of the two in the crucible of the imagination is infrequent with him, because with him it is the fancy rather than the imagination that is luxuriant and highly developed. For the architectonics of poetry he had not the requisite reach and grasp, the comprehensive and constructing vision. Nothing of his has any large design or effective interdependent proportions. In a technical way an exception should be noted in his skilful building of the ode — a form in which he was extremely successful and for which he evidently had a native aptitude. . . . Lowell's constitutes, on the whole, the most admirable American contribution to the nature poetry of English literature — far beyond that of Bryant, Whittier, or Longfellow, I think, and only occasionally excelled here and there by the magic touch of Emerson." — *W. C. Brownell,* in *Scribner's Magazine, February,* 1907.

"Lowell is a poet who seems to represent New England more variously than either of his comrades. We find in his work, as in theirs, her loyalty and moral purpose. She has been at cost for his training, and he in turn has read her heart, honoring her as a mother before the world, and seeing beauty in her common garb and speech. . . . If Lowell be not first of all an original genius, I know not where to look for one. Judged by his personal bearing, who is brighter, more persuasive, more equal to the occasion than himself, — less open to Doudan's

stricture upon writers who hoard and store up their thoughts for the betterment of their printed works? Lowell's treasury can stand the drafts of both speech and composition. Judged by his works, as a poet in the end must be, he is one who might gain by revision and compression. But think, as is his due, upon the high-water marks of his abundant tide, and see how enviable the record of a poet who is our most brilliant and learned critic, and who has given us our best native idyll, our best and most complete work in dialectic verse, and the noblest heroic ode that America has produced — each and all ranking with the first of their kinds in English literature of the modern time." — *Edmund Clarence Stedman.*

As a racy humorist and a brilliant wit using verse as an instrument of expression, he has no clear superior, probably no equal, so far at least as American readers are concerned, among writers who have employed the English language. As a satirist he has superiors, but scarcely as an inventor of *jeux d'esprit.* As a patriotic lyrist he has few equals and very few superiors in what is probably the highest function of such a poet — that of stimulating to a noble height the national instincts of his countrymen. . . . The rest of his poetry may fairly be said to gain on that of any of his American contemporaries save Poe in more sensuous rhythm, in choicer diction, in a more refined and subtilized imagination, and in a deeper, a more brooding intelligence." — *Prof. William P. Trent.*

"In originality, in virility, in many-sidedness, Lowell is the first of American poets. He not only possessed, at times in nearly equal measure, many of the qualities most notable in his fellow-poets, rivaling Bryant as a painter of nature, and Holmes in pathos, having

a touch too of Emerson's transcendentalism, and rising occasionally to Whittier's moral fervor, but he brought to all this much beside. In one vein he produced such a masterpiece of mingled pathos and nature painting as we find in the tenth Biglow letter of the second series; in another, such a lyric gem as *The Fountain;* in another, *The First Snow-Fall* and *After the Burial;* in another, again, the noble *Harvard Commemoration Ode.* . . . He had plainly a most defective ear for rhythm and verbal harmony. Except when he confines himself to simple metres, we rarely find five consecutive lines which do not in some way jar on us. His blank verse and the irregular metres which he, unfortunately, so often employs, have little or no music, and are often quite intolerable. But after all the deductions which the most exacting criticism can make, it still remains that, as a serious poet Lowell stands high. As a painter of nature, he has, when at his best, few superiors, and, in his own country, none. Whatever be their esthetic and technical deficiencies, he has written many poems of sentiment and pathos which can never fail to come home to all to whom such poetry appeals. His hortatory and didactic poetry, as it expresses itself in the *Commemoration Ode,* is worthy, if not of the music and felicity of Milton and Wordsworth, at least of their tone, when that tone is most exalted. As a humorist he is inimitable. His humor is rooted in a fine sense of the becoming, and in a profounder insight into the character of his countrymen than that of any other American writer." — *John Churton Collins.*

"He was a brilliant wit and a delightful humorist; a discursive essayist of unfailing charm; the best American critic of his time; a scholar of wide learning, deep also when his interest was most engaged; a powerful writer on great public questions; a patriot passionately pure; but first, last, and always he was a poet, never so

happy as when he was looking at the world from the poet's mount of vision and seeking for fit words and musical to tell what he had seen. But his emotion was not sufficiently 'recollected in tranquillity.' Had he been more an artist he would have been a better poet, for then he would have challenged the invasions of his literary memory, his humor, his animal spirits, within limits where they had no right of way. If his humor was his rarest, it was his most dangerous gift; so often did it tempt him to laugh out in some holy place. . . . Less charming than Longfellow, less homely than Whittier, less artistic than Holmes, less grave than Bryant, less vivid than Emerson, less unique than Poe, his qualities, intellectual, moral and esthetic, in their assemblage and coördination assign him to a place among American men of letters which is only a little lower than that which is Emerson's and his alone." — *John White Chadwick.*

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

Early in 1848 in a letter to his friend Briggs, Lowell speaks of *The Vision of Sir Launfal* as "a sort of story, and more likely to be popular than what I write generally. Maria thinks very highly of it." And in another letter he calls it "a little narrative poem." In December, 1848, it was published in a thin volume alone, and at once justified the poet's expectations of popularity. The poem was an improvisation, like that of his "musing organist," for it was written, we are told, almost at a single sitting, entirely within two days. The theme may have been suggested by Tennyson's *Sir Galahad*, but his familiarity with the old romances and his love of the mystical and symbolic sense of these good old-time tales were a quite ample source for such suggestion. Moreover Lowell in his early years was much given to seeing

visions and dreaming dreams. "During that part of my life," he says, "which I lived most alone, I was never a single night unvisited by visions, and once I thought I had a personal revelation from God Himself." The *Fairie Queen* was "the first poem I ever read," he says, and the bosky glades of Elmwood were often transformed into an enchanted forest where the Knight of the Red Cross, and Una and others in medieval costume passed up and down before his wondering eyes. This medieval romanticism was a perfectly natural accompaniment of his intense idealism.

The Vision of Sir Launfal and the *Fable for Critics*, published in the same year, illustrate the two dominant and strikingly contrasted qualities of his nature, a contrast of opposites which he himself clearly perceived. "I find myself very curiously compounded of two utterly distinct characters. One half of me is clear mystic and enthusiast, and the other, humorist," and he adds that "it would have taken very little to have made a Saint Francis" of him. It was the Saint Francis of New England, the moral and spiritual enthusiast in Lowell's nature that produced the poem and gave it power. Thus we see that notwithstanding its antique style and artificial structure, it was a perfectly direct and spontaneous expression of himself.

The allegory of the *Vision* is easily interpreted, in its main significance. There is nothing original in the lesson, the humility of true charity, and it is a common criticism that the moral purpose of the poem is lost sight of in the beautiful nature pictures. But a knowledge of the events which were commanding Lowell's attention at this time and quickening his native feelings into purposeful utterance gives to the poem a much deeper significance. In 1844, when the discussion over the annexation of Texas was going on, he wrote *The Present Crisis*, a noble appeal to his countrymen to im-

prove and elevate their principles. During the next four years he was writing editorially for the *Standard*, the official organ of the Anti-Slavery Society, at the same time he was bringing out the *Biglow Papers*. In all these forms of expression he voiced constantly the sentiment of reform, which now filled his heart like a holy zeal. The national disgrace of slavery rested heavily upon his soul. He burned with the desire to make God's justice prevail where man's justice had failed. In 1846 he said in a letter, "It seems as if my heart would break in pouring out one glorious song that should be the gospel of Reform, full of consolation and strength to the oppressed, yet falling gently and restoringly as dew on the withered youth-flowers of the oppressor. That way my madness lies, if any." This passionate yearning for reform is embodied poetically in the *Vision*. In a broad sense, therefore, the poem is an expression of ideal democracy, in which equality, sympathy, and a sense of the common brotherhood of man are the basis of all ethical actions and standards. It is the Christ-like conception of human society that is always so alluring in the poetry and so discouraging in the prose of life.

The following explanation appeared in the early editions of the poem as an introductory note:

"According to the mythology of the Romancers, the San Greal, or Holy Grail, was the cup out of which Jesus Christ partook of the last supper with his disciples. It was brought into England by Joseph of Arimathea, and remained there, an object of pilgrimage and adoration, for many years in the keeping of his lineal descendants. It was incumbent upon those who had charge of it to be chaste in thought, word, and deed; but, one of the keepers having broken this condition, the Holy Grail disappeared. From that time it was a favorite enterprise of the Knights of Arthur's court to go in search of it. Sir Galahad was at last successful in finding

it, as may be read in the seventeenth book of the Romance of King Arthur. Tennyson has made Sir Galahad the subject of one of the most exquisite of his poems.

"The plot (if I may give that name to anything so slight) of the following poem is my own, and, to serve its purposes, I have enlarged the circle of competition in search of the miraculous cup in such a manner as to include not only other persons than the heroes of the Round Table, but also a period of time subsequent to the date of King Arthur's reign."

In the last sentence there is a sly suggestion of Lowell's playfulness. Of course every one may compete in the search for the Grail, and the "time subsequent to King Arthur's reign" includes the present time. The Romance of King Arthur is the *Morte Darthur* of Sir Thomas Malory. Lowell's specific indebtedness to the medieval romances extended only to the use of the symbol of consecration to some noble purpose in the search for the Grail, and to the name of his hero. It is a free version of older French romances belonging to the Arthurian cycle. *Sir Launfal* is the title of a poem written by Sir Thomas Chestre in the reign of Henry VI, which may be found in Ritson's *Ancient English Metrical Romances*. There is nothing suggestive of Lowell's poem except the quality of generosity in the hero, who —

> "gaf gyftys largelyche,
> Gold and sylver; and clodes ryche,
> To squyer and to knight."

One of Lowell's earlier poems, *The Search*, contains the germ of *The Vision of Sir Launfal*. It represents a search for Christ, first in nature's fair woods and fields, then in the "proud world" amid "power and wealth," and the search finally ends in "a hovel rude" where —

"The King I sought for meekly stood;
A naked, hungry child
Clung round his gracious knee,
And a poor hunted slave looked up and smiled
To bless the smile that set him free."

And Christ, the seeker learns, is not to be found by wandering through the world.

His throne is with the outcast and the weak."

A similar fancy also is embodied in a little poem entitled *A Parable.* Christ goes through the world to see "How the men, my brethren, believe in me," and he finds "in church, and palace, and judgment-hall," a disregard for the primary principles of his teaching.

"Have ye founded your throne and altars, then,
On the bodies and souls of living men?
And think ye that building shall endure,
Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor?"

These early poems and passages in others written at about the same time, taken in connection with the *Vision*, show how strongly the theme had seized upon Lowell's mind.

The structure of the poem is complicated and sometimes confusing. At the outset the student must notice that there is a story within a story. The action of the major story covers only a single night, and the hero of this story is the real Sir Launfal, who in his sleep dreams the minor story, the Vision. The action of this story covers the lifetime of the hero, the imaginary Sir Launfal, from early manhood to old age, and includes his wanderings in distant lands. The poem is constructed on the principles of contrast and parallelism. By holding to this method of structure throughout Lowell sacrificed the important artistic element of unity, especially

in breaking the narrative with the Prelude to the second part. The first Prelude describing the beauty and inspiring joy of spring, typifying the buoyant youth and aspiring soul of Sir Launfal, corresponds to the second Prelude, describing the bleakness and desolation of winter, typifying the old age and desolated life of the hero. But beneath the surface of this wintry age there is a new soul of summer beauty, the warm love of suffering humanity, just as beneath the surface of the frozen brook there is an ice-palace of summer beauty. In Part First the gloomy castle with its joyless interior stands as the only cold and forbidding thing in the landscape, "like an outpost of winter;" so in Part Second the same castle with Christmas joys within is the only bright and gladsome object in the landscape. In Part First the castle gates never "might opened be"; in Part Second the "castle gates stand open now." And thus the student may find various details contrasted and paralleled. The symbolic meaning must be kept constantly in mind, or it will escape unobserved; for example, the cost of earthly things in comparison with the generosity of June corresponds to the churlish castle opposed to the inviting warmth of summer; and each symbolizes the proud, selfish, misguided heart of Sir Launfal in youth, in comparison with the humility and large Christian charity in old age. The student should search for these symbolic hints, passages in which "more is meant than meets the ear," but if he does not find all that the poet may or may not have intended in his dreamy design, there need be no detraction from the enjoyment of the poem.

Critical judgment upon *The Vision of Sir Launfal* is generally severe in respect to its structural faults. Mr. Greenslet declares that "through half a century, nine readers out of ten have mistaken Lowell's meaning," even the "numerous commentators" have "interpreted

the poem as if the young knight actually adventured the quest and returned from it at the end of years, broken and old." This, however, must be regarded as a rather exaggerated estimate of the lack of unity and consistency in the poem. Stedman says: "I think that *The Vision of Sir Launfal* owed its success quite as much to a presentation of nature as to its misty legend. It really is a landscape poem, of which the lovely passage, 'And what is so rare as a day in June?' and the wintry prelude to Part Second, are the specific features." And the English critic, J. Churton Collins, thinks that "*Sir Launfal*, except for the beautiful nature pictures, scarcely rises above the level of an Ingoldsby Legend."

The popular judgment of the poem (which after all is the important judgment) is fairly stated by Mr. Greenslet: "There is probably no poem in American literature in which a visionary faculty like that [of Lowell] is expressed with such a firm command of poetic background and variety of music as in *Sir Launfal* . . . its structure is far from perfect; yet for all that it has stood the searching test of time; it is beloved now by thousands of young American readers, for whom it has been a first initiation to the beauty of poetic idealism."

While studying *The Vision of Sir Launfal* the student should be made familiar with Tennyson's *Sir Galahad* and *The Holy Grail*, and the libretto of Wagner's *Parsifal*. Also Henry A. Abbey's magnificent series of mural paintings in the Boston Public Library, representing the Quest of the Holy Grail, may be utilized in the *Copley Prints*. If possible the story of Sir Galahad's search for the Grail in the seventeenth book of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* should be read. It would be well also to read Longfellow's *King Robert of Sicily*, which to some extent presents a likeness of motive and treatment.

THE COMMEMORATION ODE

In April, 1865, the Civil War was ended and peace was declared. On July 21 Harvard College held a solemn service in commemoration of her ninety-three sons who had been killed in the war. Eight of these fallen young heroes were of Lowell's own kindred. Personal grief thus added intensity to the deep passion of his utterance upon this great occasion. He was invited to give a poem, and the ode which he presented proved to be the supreme event of the noble service. The scene is thus described by Francis H. Underwood, who was in the audience:

"The services took place in the open air, in the presence of a great assembly. Prominent among the speakers were Major-General Meade, the hero of Gettysburg, and Major-General Devens. The wounds of the war were still fresh and bleeding, and the interest of the occasion was deep and thrilling. The summer afternoon was drawing to its close when the poet began the recital of the ode. No living audience could for the first time follow with intelligent appreciation the delivery of such a poem. To be sure, it had its obvious strong points and its sonorous charms; but, like all the later poems of the author, it is full of condensed thought and requires study. The reader to-day finds many passages whose force and beauty escaped him during the recital, but the effect of the poem at the time was overpowering. The face of the poet, always singularly expressive, was on this occasion almost transfigured — glowing, as if with an inward light. It was impossible to look away from it. Our age has furnished many great historic scenes, but this Commemoration combined the elements of grandeur and pathos, and produced an impression as lasting as life."

Of the delivery and immediate effect of the poem Mr.

Greenslet says: "Some in the audience were thrilled and shaken by it, as Lowell himself was shaken in its delivery, yet he seems to have felt with some reason that it was not a complete and immediate success. Nor is this cause for wonder. The passion of the poem was too ideal, its woven harmonies too subtle to be readily communicated to so large an audience, mastered and mellowed though it was by a single deep mood. Nor was Lowell's elocution quite that of the deep-mouthed odist capable of interpreting such organ tones of verse. But no sooner was the poem published, with the matchless Lincoln strophe inserted, than its greatness and nobility were manifest."

The circumstances connected with the writing of the ode have been described by Lowell in his private letters. It appears that he was reluctant to undertake the task, and for several weeks his mind utterly refused to respond to the high duty put upon it. At last the sublime thought came to him upon the swift wings of inspiration. "The ode itself," he says, "was an improvisation. Two days before the commemoration I had told my friend Child that it was impossible — that I was dull as a door-mat. But the next day something gave me a jog, and the whole thing came out of me with a rush. I sat up all night writing it out clear, and took it on the morning of the day to Child." In another letter he says: "The poem was written with a vehement speed, which I thought I had lost in the skirts of my professor's gown. Till within two days of the celebration I was hopelessly dumb, and then it all came with a rush, literally making me lean (mi fece magro), and so nervous that I was weeks in getting over it." In a note in Scudder's biography of Lowell (Vol. II., p. 65), it is stated upon the authority of Mrs. Lowell that the poem was begun at ten o'clock the night before the commemoration day, and finished at four o'clock in the morning. "She opened her eyes

to see him standing haggard, actually wasted by the stress of labor and the excitement which had carried him through a poem full of passion and fire, of five hundred and twenty-three lines, in the space of six hours."

Critical estimates are essentially in accord as to the deep significance and permanent poetic worth of this poem. Greenslet, the latest biographer of Lowell, says that the ode, "if not his most perfect, is surely his noblest and most splendid work," and adds: "Until the dream of human brotherhood is forgotten, the echo of its large music will not wholly die away." Professor Beers declares it to be, "although uneven, one of the finest occasional poems in the language, and the most important contribution which our Civil War has made to song." Of its exalted patriotism, George William Curtis says: "The patriotic heart of America throbs forever in Lincoln's Gettysburg address. But nowhere in literature is there a more magnificent and majestic personification of a country whose name is sacred to its children, nowhere a profounder passion of patriotic loyalty, than in the closing lines of the Commemoration Ode. The American whose heart, swayed by that lofty music, does not thrill and palpitate with solemn joy and high resolve does not yet know what it is to be an American."

With the praise of a discriminating criticism Stedman discusses the ode in his *Poets of America:* "Another poet would have composed a less unequal ode; no American could have glorified it with braver passages, with whiter heat, with language and imagery so befitting impassioned thought. Tried by the rule that a true poet is at his best with the greatest theme, Lowell's strength is indisputable. The ode is no smooth-cut verse from Pentelicus, but a mass of rugged quartz, beautiful with prismatic crystals, and deep veined here and there with virgin gold. The early strophes, though opening with a fine abrupt line, 'weak-winged is song,' are scarcely

firm and incisive. Lowell had to work up to his theme. In the third division, 'Many loved Truth, and lavished life's best oil,' he struck upon a new and musical intonation of the tenderest thoughts. The quaver of this melodious interlude carries the ode along, until the great strophe is reached, —

'Such was he, our Martyr-Chief,'

in which the man, Abraham Lincoln, whose death had but just closed the national tragedy, is delineated in a manner that gives this poet a preëminence, among those who capture likeness in enduring verse, that we award to Velasquez among those who fasten it upon the canvas. 'One of Plutarch's men' is before us, face to face; an historic character whom Lowell fully comprehended, and to whose height he reached in this great strophe. Scarcely less fine is his tearful, yet transfiguring, Avete to the sacred dead of the Commemoration. The weaker divisions of the production furnish a background to these passages, and at the close the poet rises with the invocation, —

'Bow down, dear Land, for thou hast found release!'

a strain which shows that when Lowell determinedly sets his mouth to the trumpet, the blast is that of Roncesvalles."

W. C. Brownell, the latest critic of Lowell's poetry, says of this poem: "The ode is too long, its evolution is defective, it contains verbiage, it preaches. But passages of it — the most famous having characteristically been interpolated after its delivery — are equal to anything of the kind. The temptation to quote from it is hard to withstand. It is the cap-sheaf of Lowell's achievement." In this ode "he reaches, if he does not throughout maintain, his own 'clear-ethered height' and his

verse has the elevation of ecstasy and the splendor of the sublime."

The versification of this poem should be studied with some particularity. Of the forms of lyric expression the ode is the most elaborate and dignified. It is adapted only to lofty themes and stately occasions. Great liberty is allowed in the choice and arrangement of its meter, rhymes, and stanzaic forms, that its varied form and movement may follow the changing phases of the sentiment and passion called forth by the theme. Lowell has given us an account of his own consideration of this matter. "My problem," he says, "was to contrive a measure which should not be tedious by uniformity, which should vary with varying moods, in which the transitions (including those of the voice) should be managed without jar. I at first thought of mixed rhymed and blank verses of unequal measures, like those in the choruses of *Samson Agonistes*, which are in the main masterly. Of course, Milton deliberately departed from that stricter form of Greek chorus to which it was bound quite as much (I suspect) by the law of its musical accompaniment as by any sense of symmetry. I wrote some stanzas of the *Commemoration Ode* on this theory at first, leaving some verses without a rhyme to match. But my ear was better pleased when the rhyme, coming at a longer interval, as a far-off echo rather than instant reverberation, produced the same effect almost, and yet was gratified by unexpectedly recalling an association and faint reminiscence of consonance."

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THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

And Other Poems

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

Prelude to Part First

Over his keys the musing organist,
Beginning doubtfully and far away,
First lets his fingers wander as they list,
And builds a bridge from Dreamland for his lay:
Then, as the touch of his loved instrument
Gives hope and fervor, nearer draws his theme,
First guessed by faint auroral flushes sent
Along the wavering vista of his dream.

Not only around our infancy
Doth heaven with all its splendors lie;
Daily, with souls that cringe and plot,
We Sinais climb and know it not.

Over our manhood bend the skies;
Against our fallen and traitor lives
The great winds utter prophecies;
With our faint hearts the mountain strives;
Its arms outstretched, the druid wood
Waits with its benedicite;
And to our age's drowsy blood
Still shouts the inspiring sea.

Earth gets its price for what Earth gives us;
The beggar is taxed for a corner to die in,
The priest hath his fee who comes and shrives us,
We bargain for the graves we lie in;
At the Devil's booth are all things sold,
Each ounce of dross costs its ounce of gold;
For a cap and bells our lives we pay,
Bubbles we buy with a whole soul's tasking
'T is heaven alone that is given away,
'T is only God may be had for the asking;
No price is set on the lavish summer;
June may be had by the poorest comer.

And what is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days;

Then Heaven tries the earth if it be in tune,
And over it softly her warm ear lays:
Whether we look, or whether we listen,
We hear life murmur, or see it glisten;
Every clod feels a stir of might,
An instinct within it that reaches and towers,
And, groping blindly above it for light,
Climbs to a soul in grass and flowers;
The flush of life may well be seen
Thrilling back over hills and valleys;
The cowslip startles in meadows green,
The buttercup catches the sun in its chalice,
And there's never a leaf nor a blade too mean
To be some happy creature's palace;
The little bird sits at his door in the sun,
Atilt like a blossom among the leaves,
And lets his illumined being o'errun
With the deluge of summer it receives;
His mate feels the eggs beneath her wings,
And the heart in her dumb breast flutters and sings;
He sings to the wide world, and she to her nest, —

In the nice ear of Nature which song is the best?

Now is the high-tide of the year,
And whatever of life hath ebbed away
Comes flooding back, with a ripply cheer,
Into every bare inlet and creek and bay;
Now the heart is so full that a drop overfills it,
We are happy now because God wills it;
No matter how barren the past may have been,
'T is enough for us now that the leaves are green;
We sit in the warm shade and feel right well
How the sap creeps up and the blossoms swell;
We may shut our eyes, but we cannot help knowing
That skies are clear and grass is growing;
The breeze comes whispering in our ear
That dandelions are blossoming near,
That maize has sprouted, that streams are flowing,
That the river is bluer than the sky,
That the robin is plastering his house hard by;
And if the breeze kept the good news back

For other couriers we should not lack;
We could guess it all by yon heifer's lowing, —
And hark! how clear bold chanticleer,
Warmed with the new wine of the year,
Tells all in his lusty crowing!

Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;
Everything is happy now,
Everything is upward striving;
'T is as easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green or skies to be blue, —
'T is the natural way of living:
Who knows whither the clouds have fled?
In the unscarred heaven they leave no wake;
And the eyes forget the tears they have shed,
The heart forgets its sorrow and ache;
The soul partakes the season's youth,
And the sulphurous rifts of passion and woe
Lie deep 'neath a silence pure and smooth,
Like burnt-out craters healed with snow.
What wonder if Sir Launfal now
Remembered the keeping of his vow?

Part First

I

"My golden spurs now bring to me,
And bring to me my richest mail,
For to-morrow I go over land and sea
In search of the Holy Grail;
Shall never a bed for me be spread,
Nor shall a pillow be under my head,
Till I begin my vow to keep;
Here on the rushes will I sleep,
And perchance there may come a vision true
Ere day create the world anew."
Slowly Sir Launfal's eyes grew dim,
Slumber fell like a cloud on him,
And into his soul the vision flew.

II

The crows flapped over by twos and threes,
In the pool drowsed the cattle up to their knees,
The little birds sang as if it were
The one day of summer in all the year,

And the very leaves seemed to sing on the trees:
The castle alone in the landscape lay
Like an outpost of winter, dull and gray;
'T was the proudest hall in the North Countree,
And never its gates might opened be,
Save to lord or lady of high degree;
Summer besieged it on every side,
But the churlish stone her assaults defied;
She could not scale the chilly wall,
Though around it for leagues her pavilions tall
Stretched left and right,
Over the hills and out of sight;
Green and broad was every tent,
And out of each a murmur went
Till the breeze fell off at night.

II.

The drawbridge dropped with a surly clang,
And through the dark arch a charger sprang,
Bearing Sir Launfal, the maiden knight,
In his gilded mail, that flamed so bright
It seemed the dark castle had gathered all

Those shafts the fierce sun had shot over its wall
In his siege of three hundred summers long,
And, binding them all in one blazing sheaf,
Had cast them forth: so, young and strong,
And lightsome as a locust leaf,
Sir Launfal flashed forth in his maiden mail,
To seek in all climes for the Holy Grail.

IV

It was morning on hill and stream and tree,
And morning in the young knight's heart;
Only the castle moodily
Rebuffed the gifts of the sunshine free,
And gloomed by itself apart;
The season brimmed all other things up
Full as the rain fills the pitcher-plant's cup.

V

As Sir Launfal made morn through the darksome gate,
He was 'ware of a leper, crouched by the same,

Who begged with his hand and moaned as he
sate;
And a loathing over Sir Launfal came,
The sunshine went out of his soul with a thrill,
The flesh 'neath his armor 'gan shrink and
crawl,
And midway its leap his heart stood still
Like a frozen waterfall;
For this man, so foul and bent of stature,
Rasped harshly against his dainty nature,
And seemed the one blot on the summer
morn, —
So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn.

VI

The leper raised not the gold from the dust:
"Better to me the poor man's crust,
Better the blessing of the poor,
Though I turn me empty from his door;
That is no true alms which the hand can
hold;
He gives only the worthless gold
Who gives from a sense of duty;
But he who gives a slender mite,

And gives to that which is out of sight,
That thread of the all-sustaining Beauty
Which runs through all and doth all unite, —
The hand cannot clasp the whole of his alms,
The heart outstretches its eager palms,
For a god goes with it and makes it store
To the soul that was starving in darkness before."

Prelude to Part Second

Down swept the chill wind from the mountain peak,
From the snow five thousand summers old;
On open wold and hill-top bleak
It had gathered all the cold,
And whirled it like sleet on the wanderer's cheek;
It carried a shiver everywhere
From the unleafed boughs and pastures bare;
The little brook heard it and built a roof
'Neath which he could house him, winter-proof;
All night by the white stars' frosty gleams
He groined his arches and matched his beams;

Slender and clear were his crystal spars
As the lashes of light that trim the stars;
He sculptured every summer delight
In his halls and chambers out of sight;
Sometimes his tinkling waters slipt
Down through a frost-leaved forest-crypt,
Long, sparkling aisles of steel-stemmed trees
Bending to counterfeit a breeze;
Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew
But silvery mosses that downward grew;
Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief
With quaint arabesques of ice-fern leaf;
Sometimes it was simply smooth and clear
For the gladness of heaven to shine through, and here
He had caught the nodding bulrush-tops
And hung them thickly with diamond-drops,
That crystalled the beams of moon and sun,
And made a star of every one:
No mortal builder's most rare device
Could match this winter-palace of ice;
'T was as if every image that mirrored lay
In his depths serene through the summer day,
Each fleeting shadow of earth and sky,

Lest the happy model should be lost,
Had been mimicked in fairy masonry
By the elfin builders of the frost.

Within the hall are song and laughter,
The cheeks of Christmas glow red and jolly,
And sprouting is every corbel and rafter
With lightsome green of ivy and holly;
Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide
Wallows the Yule-log's roaring tide;
The broad flame-pennons droop and flap
And belly and tug as a flag in the wind;
Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,
Hunted to death in its galleries blind;
And swift little troops of silent sparks,
Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,
Go threading the soot-forest's tangled darks
Like herds of startled deer.

But the wind without was eager and sharp,
Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp,
And rattles and wrings
The icy strings,

Singing, in dreary monotone,
A Christmas carol of its own,
Whose burden still, as he might guess,
Was — "Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless!"

The voice of the seneschal flared like a torch
As he shouted the wanderer away from the porch,
And he sat in the gateway and saw all night
The great hall-fire, so cheery and bold,
Through the window-slits of the castle old,
Build out its piers of ruddy light
Against the drift of the cold.

Part Second

I

There was never a leaf on bush or tree,
The bare boughs rattled shudderingly;
The river was dumb and could not speak,
For the weaver Winter its shroud had spun,
A single crow on the tree-top bleak
From his shining feathers shed off the cold sun;

Again it was morning, but shrunk and cold,
As if her veins were sapless and old,
And she rose up decrepitly
For a last dim look at earth and sea.

II

Sir Launfal turned from his own hard gate,
For another heir in his earldom sate;
An old, bent man, worn out and frail,
He came back from seeking the Holy Grail;
Little he recked of his earldom's loss,
No more on his surcoat was blazoned the cross,
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

III

Sir Launfal's raiment thin and spare
Was idle mail 'gainst the barbed air,
For it was just at the Christmas time;
So he mused, as he sat, of a sunnier clime,
And sought for a shelter from cold and snow
In the light and warmth of long ago;
He sees the snake-like caravan crawl

O'er the edge of the desert, black and small,
Then nearer and nearer, till, one by one,
He can count the camels in the sun,
As over the red-hot sands they pass
To where, in its slender necklace of grass,
The little spring laughed and leapt in the shade,
And with its own self like an infant played,
And waved its signal of palms.

IV

"For Christ's sweet sake, I beg an alms;"
The happy camels may reach the spring,
But Sir Launfal sees only the grewsome thing,
The leper, lank as the rain-blanched bone,
That cowers beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas
In the desolate horror of his disease.

V

And Sir Launfal said, — "I behold in thee
An image of Him who died on the tree;
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns,
Thou also hast had the world's buffets and
scorns, —

And to thy life were not denied
The wounds in the hands and feet and side:
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;
Behold, through him, I give to thee!"

VI

Then the soul of the leper stood up in his eyes
And looked at Sir Launfal, and straightway he
Remembered in what a haughtier guise
He had flung an alms to leprosie,
When he girt his young life up in gilded mail
And set forth in search of the Holy Grail.
The heart within him was ashes and dust;
He parted in twain his single crust,
He broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,
And gave the leper to eat and drink;
'T was a moldy crust of coarse brown bread,
'T was water out of a wooden bowl, —
Yet with fine wheaten bread was the leper fed,
And 't was red wine he drank with his thirsty soul.

VII

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
A light shone round about the place;
The leper no longer crouched at his side,
But stood before him glorified,
Shining and tall and fair and straight
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate, —
Himself the Gate whereby men can
Enter the temple of God in Man.

VIII

His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine,
And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,
That mingle their softness and quiet in one
With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;
And the voice that was softer than silence said,
"Lo, it is I, be not afraid!
In many climes, without avail,
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;

"Behold, it is here, — this cup which thou
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
This crust is my body broken for thee,
This water his blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need, —
Not what we give, but what we share, —
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three, —
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

IX

Sir Launfal awoke as from a swound: —
"The Grail in my castle here is found!
Hang my idle armor up on the wall,
Let it be the spider's banquet-hall;
He must be fenced with stronger mail
Who would seek and find the Holy Grail."

X

The castle gate stands open now,
And the wanderer is welcome to the hall
As the hangbird is to the elm-tree bough;
No longer scowl the turrets tall,
The Summer's long siege at last is o'er:

When the first poor outcast went in at the door,
She entered with him in disguise,
And mastered the fortress by surprise;
There is no spot she loves so well on ground,
She lingers and smiles there the whole year round;
The meanest serf on Sir Launfal's land
Has hall and bower at his command;
And there's no poor man in the North Countree
But is lord of the earldom as much as he.

THE SHEPHERD OF KING ADMETUS

There came a youth upon the earth,
Some thousand years ago,
Whose slender hands were nothing worth,
Whether to plow, or reap, or sow.

He made a lyre, and drew therefrom
Music so strange and rich,
That all men loved to hear, — and some
Muttered of fagots for a witch.

But King Admetus, one who had
Pure taste by right divine,

Decreed his singing not too bad
To hear between the cups of wine

And so, well pleased with being soothed
Into a sweet half-sleep,
Three times his kingly beard he smoothed
And made him viceroy o'er his sheep.

His words were simple words enough,
And yet he used them so,
That what in other mouths were rough
In his seemed musical and low.

Men called him but a shiftless youth,
In whom no good they saw;
And yet, unwittingly, in truth,
They made his careless words their law.

They knew not how he learned at all,
For, long hour after hour,
He sat and watched the dead leaves fall
Or mused upon a common flower.

It seemed the loveliness of things
Did teach him all their use,

For, in mere weeds, and stones, and springs,
He found a healing power profuse.

Men granted that his speech was wise,
But, when a glance they caught
Of his slim grace and woman's eyes,
They laughed, and called him good-for-naught.

Yet after he was dead and gone,
And e'en his memory dim,
Earth seemed more sweet to live upon,
More full of love, because of him.

And day by day more holy grew
Each spot where he had trod,
Till after-poets only knew
Their first-born brother as a god.

AN INCIDENT IN A RAILROAD CAR

He spoke of Burns: men rude and rough
Pressed round to hear the praise of one
Whose heart was made of manly, simple, stuff,
As homespun as their own.

And, when he read, they forward leaned,
Drinking, with eager hearts and ears,
His brook-like songs whom glory never weaned
From humble smiles and tears.

Slowly there grew a tender awe,
Sunlike, o'er faces brown and hard,
As if in him who read they felt and saw
Some presence of the bard.

It was a sight for sin and wrong
And slavish tyranny to see,
A sight to make our faith more pure and strong
In high humanity.

I thought, these men will carry hence
Promptings their former life above,
And something of a finer reverence
For beauty, truth, and love.

God scatters love on every side,
Freely among his children all,
And always hearts are lying open wide,
Wherein some grains may fall.

There is no wind but soweth seeds
Of a more true and open life,
Which burst unlooked for, into high-souled deeds,
With wayside beauty rife.

We find within these souls of ours
Some wild germs of a higher birth,
Which in the poet's tropic heart bear flowers
Whose fragrance fills the earth.

Within the hearts of all men lie
These promises of wider bliss,
Which blossom into hopes that cannot die,
In sunny hours like this.

All that hath been majestical
In life or death, since time began,
Is native in the simple heart of all,
The angel heart of man.

And thus, among the untaught poor,
Great deeds and feelings find a home,
That cast in shadow all the golden lore
Of classic Greece and Rome.

O, mighty brother-soul of man,
Where'er thou art, in low or high,
Thy skyey arches with exulting span
O'er-roof infinity!

All thoughts that mould the age begin
Deep down within the primitive soul,
And from the many slowly upward win
To one who grasps the whole.

In his wide brain the feeling deep
That struggled on the many's tongue
Swells to a tide of thought, whose surges leap
O'er the weak thrones of wrong.

All thought begins in feeling, — wide
In the great mass its base is hid,
And, narrowing up to thought, stands glorified,
A moveless pyramid.

Nor is he far astray, who deems
That every hope, which rises and grows broad

In the world's heart, by ordered impulse streams
From the great heart of God.

God wills, man hopes; in common souls
Hope is but vague and undefined,
Till from the poet's tongue the message rolls
A blessing to his kind.

Never did Poesy appear
So full of heaven to me, as when
I saw how it would pierce through pride and fear,
To the lives of coarsest men.

It may be glorious to write
Thoughts that shall glad the two or three
High souls, like those far stars that come in sight
Once in a century; —

But better far it is to speak
One simple word, which now and then
Shall waken their free nature in the weak
And friendless sons of men;

To write some earnest verse or line
Which, seeking not the praise of art,
Shall make a clearer faith and manhood shine
In the untutored heart.

He who doth this, in verse or prose,
May be forgotten in his day,
But surely shall be crowned at last with those
Who live and speak for aye.

HEBE

I saw the twinkle of white feet,
I saw the flash of robes descending;
Before her ran an influence fleet,
That bowed my heart like barley bending.

As, in bare fields, the searching bees
Pilot to blooms beyond our finding,
It led me on, by sweet degrees
Joy's simple honey-cells unbinding.

Those Graces were that seemed grim Fates;
With nearer love the sky leaned o'er me;
The long-sought Secret's golden gates
On musical hinges swung before me.

I saw the brimmed bowl in her grasp
Thrilling with godhood; like a lover
I sprang the proffered life to clasp; —
The beaker fell; the luck was over.

The Earth has drunk the vintage up;
What boots it patch the goblet's splinters?
Can Summer fill the icy cup,
Whose treacherous crystal is but Winter's?

O spendthrift Haste! await the gods;
Their nectar crowns the lips of Patience;
Haste scatters on unthankful sods
The immortal gift in vain libations.

Coy Hebe flies from those that woo,
And shuns the hands would seize upon her;
Follow thy life, and she will sue
To pour for thee the cup of honor.

TO THE DANDELION

Dear common flower, that grow'st beside the way,
Fringing the dusty road with harmless gold,

First pledge of blithesome May,
Which children pluck, and, full of pride, uphold,
High-hearted buccaneers, o'erjoyed that they
An Eldorado in the grass have found,
Which not the rich earth's ample round
May match in wealth — thou art more dear to me
Than all the prouder summer-blooms may be.

Gold such as thine ne'er drew the Spanish prow
Through the primeval hush of Indian seas,
Nor wrinkled the lean brow
Of age, to rob the lover's heart of ease;
'T is the Spring's largess, which she scatters now
To rich and poor alike, with lavish hand,
Though most hearts never understand
To take it at God's value, but pass by
The offered wealth with unrewarded eye.

Thou art my tropics and mine Italy;
To look at thee unlocks a warmer clime;

The eyes thou givest me
Are in the heart, and heed not space or time.
Not in mid June the golden-cuirassed bee
Feels a more summer-like, warm ravishment
In the white lily's breezy tent,
His fragrant Sybaris, than I, when first
From the dark green thy yellow circles burst.

Then think I of deep shadows on the grass, —
Of meadows where in sun the cattle graze,
Where, as the breezes pass,
The gleaming rushes lean a thousand ways, —
Of leaves that slumber in a cloudy mass,
Or whiten in the wind, of waters blue
That from the distance sparkle through
Some woodland gap, and of a sky above,
Where one white cloud like a stray lamb doth move.

My childhood's earliest thoughts are linked with thee;
The sight of thee calls back the robin's song,
Who, from the dark old tree
Beside the door, sang clearly all day long,

And I, secure in childish piety,
Listened as if I heard an angel sing
With news from Heaven, which he could bring
Fresh every day to my untainted ears,
When birds and flowers and I were happy peers.

Thou art the type of those meek charities
Which make up half the nobleness of life,
Those cheap delights the wise
Pluck from the dusty wayside of earth's strife;
Words of frank cheer, glances of friendly eyes,
Love's smallest coin, which yet to some may give
The morsel that may keep alive
A starving heart, and teach it to behold
Some glimpse of God where all before was cold.

Thy wingèd seeds, whereof the winds take care,
Are like the words of poet and of sage
Which through the free heaven fare,
And, now unheeded, in another age
Take root, and to the gladdened future bear

That witness which the present would not heed,
Bringing forth many a thought and deed,
And, planted safely in the eternal sky,
Bloom into stars which earth is guided by.

Full of deep love thou art, yet not more full
Than all thy common brethren of the ground,
Wherein, were we not dull,
Some words of highest wisdom might be found,
Yet earnest faith from day to day may cull
Some syllables, which, rightly joined, can make
A spell to soothe life's bitterest ache,
And ope Heaven's portals, which are near us still,
Yea, nearer ever than the gates of Ill.

How like a prodigal doth nature seem,
When thou, for all thy gold, so common art!
Thou teachest me to deem
More sacredly of every human heart,
Since each reflects in joy its scanty gleam
Of Heaven, and could some wondrous secret show,
Did we but pay the love we owe,

And with a child's undoubting wisdom look
On all these living pages of God's book.

But let me read thy lesson right or no,
Of one good gift from thee my heart is sure;
Old I shall never grow
While thou each year dost come to keep me pure
With legends of my childhood; ah, we owe
Well more than half life's holiness to these
Nature's first lowly influences,
At thought of which the heart's glad doors burst ope,
In dreariest days, to welcome peace and hope.

MY LOVE

Not as all other women are
Is she that to my soul is dear;
Her glorious fancies come from far,
Beneath the silver evening-star,
And yet her heart is ever near.

Great feelings hath she of her own,
Which lesser souls may never know;

God giveth them to her alone,
And sweet they are as any tone
Wherewith the wind may choose to blow.

Yet in herself she dwelleth not,
Although no home were half so fair;
No simplest duty is forgot,
Life hath no dim and lowly spot
That doth not in her sunshine share.

She doeth little kindnesses,
Which most leave undone, or despise;
For naught that sets one heart at ease,
And giveth happiness or peace,
Is low-esteemèd in her eyes.

She hath no scorn of common things,
And, though she seem of other birth,
Round us her heart entwines and clings,
And patiently she folds her wings
To tread the humble paths of earth.

Blessing she is: God made her so,
And deeds of week-day holiness

Fall from her noiseless as the snow,
Nor hath she ever chanced to know
That aught were easier than to bless.

She is most fair, and thereunto
Her life doth rightly harmonize;
Feeling or thought that was not true
Ne'er made less beautiful the blue
Unclouded heaven of her eyes.

She is a woman: one in whom
The spring-time of her childish years
Hath never lost its fresh perfume,
Though knowing well that life hath room
For many blights and many tears.

I love her with a love as still
As a broad river's peaceful might,
Which, by high tower and lowly mill,
Goes wandering at its own will,
And yet doth ever flow aright.

And, on its full, deep breast serene,
Like quiet isles my duties lie;
It flows around them and between.

And makes them fresh and fair and green,
Sweet homes wherein to live and die.

THE CHANGELING

I HAD a little daughter,
And she was given to me
To lead me gently backward
To the Heavenly Father's knee,
That I, by the force of nature,
Might in some dim wise divine
The depth of his infinite patience
To this wayward soul of mine.

I know not how others saw her,
But to me she was wholly fair,
And the light of the heaven she came from
Still lingered and gleamed in her hair;
For it was as wavy and golden,
And as many changes took,
As the shadows of sun-gilt ripples
On the yellow bed of a brook.

To what can I liken her smiling
Upon me, her kneeling lover?

How it leaped from her lips to her eyelids,
And dimpled her wholly over,
Till her outstretched hands smiled also,
And I almost seemed to see
The very heart of her mother
Sending sun through her veins to me!

She had been with us scarce a twelve-month,
And it hardly seemed a day,
When a troop of wandering angels
Stole my little daughter away;
Or perhaps those heavenly Zingari
But loosed the hampering strings,
And when they had opened her cage-door,
My little bird used her wings.

But they left in her stead a changeling,
A little angel child,
That seems like her bud in full blossom,
And smiles as she never smiled:
When I wake in the morning, I see it
Where she always used to lie,
And I feel as weak as a violet
Alone 'neath the awful sky.

As weak, yet as trustful also;
For the whole year long I see
All the wonders of faithful Nature
Still worked for the love of me;
Winds wander, and dews drip earthward,
Rain falls, suns rise and set,
Earth whirls, and all but to prosper
A poor little violet.

This child is not mine as the first was,
I cannot sing it to rest,
I cannot lift it up fatherly
And bliss it upon my breast;
Yet it lies in my little one's cradle
And sits in my little one's chair,
And the light of the heaven she's gone to
Transfigures its golden hair.

AN INDIAN-SUMMER REVERIE

What visionary tints the year puts on,
When falling leaves falter through motionless air
Or numbly cling and shiver to be gone!
How shimmer the low flats and pastures bare,

As with her nectar Hebe Autumn fills
The bowl between me and those distant hills,
And smiles and shakes abroad her misty, tremulous hair!

No more the landscape holds its wealth apart,
Making me poorer in my poverty,
But mingles with my senses and my heart;
My own projected spirit seems to me
In her own reverie the world to steep;
'T is she that waves to sympathetic sleep,
Moving, as she is moved, each field and hill and tree.

How fuse and mix, with what unfelt degrees,
Clasped by the faint horizon's languid arms,
Each into each, the hazy distances!
The softened season all the landscape charms;
Those hills, my native village that embay,

In waves of dreamier purple roll away,
And floating in mirage seem all the glimmering farms.

Far distant sounds the hidden chickadee
Close at my side; far distant sound the leaves;
The fields seem fields of dream, where Memory
Wanders like gleaning Ruth; and as the sheaves
Of wheat and barley wavered in the eye
Of Boaz as the maiden's glow went by,
So tremble and seem remote all things the sense receives.

The cock's shrill trump that tells of scattered corn,
Passed breezily on by all his flapping mates,
Faint and more faint, from barn to barn is borne,
Southward, perhaps to far Magellan's Straits;
Dimly I catch the throb of distant flails;
Silently overhead the hen-hawk sails,

With watchful, measuring eye, and for his quarry waits.

The sobered robin, hunger-silent now,
Seeks cedar-berries blue, his autumn cheer;
The chipmunk, on the shingly shagbark's bough,
Now saws, now lists with downward eye and ear,
Then drops his nut, and, cheeping, with a bound
Whisks to his winding fastness underground;
The clouds like swans drift down the streaming atmosphere.

O'er yon bare knoll the pointed cedar shadows
Drowse on the crisp, gray moss; the ploughman's call
Creeps faint as smoke from black, fresh-furrowed meadows;
The single crow a single caw lets fall;
And all around me every bush and tree

Says Autumn's here, and Winter soon
will be,
Who snows his soft, white sleep and silence
over all.

The birch, most shy and ladylike of trees,
Her poverty, as best she may, retrieves,
And hints at her foregone gentilities
With some saved relics of her wealth of
leaves;
The swamp-oak, with his royal purple on,
Glares red as blood across the sinking sun,
As one who proudlier to a falling fortune
cleaves.

He looks a sachem, in red blanket wrapt,
Who, 'mid some council of the sad-garbed
whites,
Erect and stern, in his own memories lapt,
With distant eye broods over other sights,
Sees the hushed wood the city's flare re-
place,
The wounded turf heal o'er the railway's
trace,

And roams the savage Past of his undwindled rights.

The red-oak, softer-grained, yields all for lost,
And, with his crumpled foliage stiff and dry,
After the first betrayal of the frost,
Rebuffs the kiss of the relenting sky;
The chestnuts, lavish of their long-hid gold,
To the faint Summer, beggared now and old,
Pour back the sunshine hoarded 'neath her favoring eye.

The ash her purple drops forgivingly
And sadly, breaking not the general hush;
The maple-swamps glow like a sunset sea,
Each leaf a ripple with its separate flush;
All round the wood's edge creeps the skirting blaze
Of bushes low, as when, on cloudy days,
Ere the rain falls, the cautious farmer burns his brush.

O'er yon low wall, which guards one unkempt zone,
Where vines and weeds and scrub-oaks intertwine
Safe from the plough, whose rough, discordant stone
Is massed to one soft gray by lichens fine,
The tangled blackberry, crossed and recrossed, weaves
A prickly network of ensanguined leaves;
Hard by, with coral beads, the prim black-alders shine.

Pillaring with flame this crumbling boundary,
Whose loose blocks topple 'neath the plough-boy's foot,
Who, with each sense shut fast except the eye,
Creeps close and scares the jay he hoped to shoot,
The woodbine up the elm's straight stem aspires,
Coiling it, harmless, with autumnal fires;

In the ivy's paler blaze the martyr oak stands
mute.

Below, the Charles, a stripe of nether sky,
Now hid by rounded apple-trees between,
Whose gaps the misplaced sail sweeps
bellying by,
Now flickering golden through a woodland
screen,
Then spreading out, at his next turn be-
yond,
A silver circle like an inland pond —
Slips seaward silently through marshes purple
and green.

Dear marshes! vain to him the gift of
sight
Who cannot in their various incomes share,
From every season drawn, of shade and
light,
Who sees in them but levels brown and
bare;
Each change of storm or sunshine scatters
free

On them its largess of variety,
For Nature with cheap means still works her wonders rare.

In spring they lie one broad expanse of green,
O'er which the light winds run with glimmering feet:
Here, yellower stripes track out the creek unseen,
There, darker growths o'er hidden ditches meet;
And purpler stains show where the blossoms crowd,
As if the silent shadow of a cloud
Hung there becalmed, with the next breath to fleet.

All round, upon the river's slippery edge,
Witching to deeper calm the drowsy tide,
Whispers and leans the breeze-entangling sedge;
Through emerald glooms the lingering waters slide,

Or, sometimes wavering, throw back the sun,
And the stiff banks in eddies melt and run
Of dimpling light, and with the current seem to glide.

In summer 't is a blithesome sight to see,
As, step by step, with measured swing, they pass,
The wide-ranked mowers wading to the knee,
Their sharp scythes panting through the wiry grass;
Then, stretched beneath a rick's shade in a ring,
Their nooning take, while one begins to sing
A stave that droops and dies 'neath the close sky of brass.

Meanwhile that devil-may-care, the bobolink,
Remembering duty, in mid-quaver stops

Just ere he sweeps o'er rapture's tremulous brink,
And 'twixt the winrows most demurely drops,
A decorous bird of business, who provides
For his brown mate and fledglings six besides,
And looks from right to left, a farmer 'mid his crops.

Another change subdues them in the fall,
But saddens not; they still show merrier tints,
Though sober russet seems to cover all;
When the first sunshine through their dew-drops glints,
Look how the yellow clearness, streamed across,
Redeems with rarer hues the season's loss,
As Dawn's feet there had touched and left their rosy prints.

Or come when sunset gives its freshened zest,
Lean o'er the bridge and let the ruddy thrill,

While the shorn sun swells down the hazy west,
Glow opposite; — the marshes drink their fill
And swoon with purple veins, then slowly fade
Through pink to brown, as eastward moves the shade,
Lengthening with stealthy creep, of Simond's darkening hill.

Later, and yet ere winter wholly shuts,
Ere through the first dry snow the runner grates,
And the loath cart-wheel screams in slippery ruts,
While firmer ice the eager boy awaits,
Trying each buckle and strap beside the fire,
And until bedtime plays with his desire,
Twenty times putting on and off his new-bought skates; —

Then, every morn, the river's banks shine bright

With smooth plate-armor, treacherous and frail,
By the frost's clinking hammers forged at night,
'Gainst which the lances of the sun prevail,
Giving a pretty emblem of the day
When guiltier arms in light shall melt away,
And states shall move free-limbed, loosed from war's cramping mail.

And now those waterfalls the ebbing river
Twice every day creates on either side
Tinkle, as through their fresh-sparred grots they shiver
In grass-arched channels to the sun denied;
High flaps in sparkling blue the far-heard crow,
The silvered flats gleam frostily below,
Suddenly drops the gull and breaks the glassy tide.

But crowned in turn by vying seasons three,

Their winter halo hath a fuller ring;
This glory seems to rest immovably, —
The others were too fleet and vanishing;
When the hid tide is at its highest flow,
O'er marsh and stream one breathless trance of snow
With brooding fulness awes and hushes everything.

The sunshine seems blown off by the bleak wind,
As pale as formal candles lit by day;
Gropes to the sea the river dumb and blind;
The brown ricks, snow-thatched by the storm in play,
Show pearly breakers combing o'er their lee,
White crests as of some just enchanted sea,
Checked in their maddest leap and hanging poised midway.

But when the eastern blow, with rain aslant,

From mid-sea's prairies green and rolling plains
Drives in his wallowing herds of billows gaunt,
And the roused Charles remembers in his veins
Old Ocean's blood and snaps his gyves of frost,
That tyrannous silence on the shores is tost
In dreary wreck, and crumbling desolation reigns.

Edgewise or flat, in Druid-like device,
With leaden pools between or gullies bare,
The blocks lie strewn, a bleak Stonehenge of ice;
No life, no sound, to break the grim despair,
Save sullen plunge, as through the sedges stiff
Down crackles riverward some thaw-sapped cliff,
Or when the close-wedged fields of ice crunch here and there.

But let me turn from fancy-pictured scenes
To that whose pastoral calm before me lies:
Here nothing harsh or rugged intervenes;
The early evening with her misty dyes
Smooths off the ravelled edges of the nigh,
Relieves the distant with her cooler sky,
And tones the landscape down, and soothes the wearied eyes.

There gleams my native village, dear to me,
Though higher change's waves each day are seen,
Whelming fields famed in boyhood's history,
Sanding with houses the diminished green;
There, in red brick, which softening time defies,
Stand square and stiff the Muses' factories; —
How with my life knit up is every well-known scene!

Flow on, dear river! not alone you flow

To outward sight, and through your marshes wind;
Fed from the mystic springs of long-ago,
Your twin flows silent through my world of mind:
Grow dim, dear marshes, in the evening's gray!
Before my inner sight ye stretch away,
And will forever, though these fleshly eyes grow blind.

Beyond the hillock's house-bespotted swell,
Where Gothic chapels house the horse and chaise,
Where quiet cits in Grecian temples dwell,
Where Coptic tombs resound with prayer and praise,
Where dust and mud the equal year divide,
There gentle Allston lived, and wrought, and died,
Transfiguring street and shop with his illumined gaze.

Virgilium vidi tantum, — I have seen

But as a boy, who looks alike on all,
That misty hair, that fine Undine-like mien,
Tremulous as down to feeling's faintest call;—
Ah, dear old homestead! count it to thy fame
That thither many times the Painter came; —
One elm yet bears his name, a feathery tree and tall.

Swiftly the present fades in memory's glow, —
Our only sure possession is the past;
The village blacksmith died a month ago,
And dim to me the forge's roaring blast;
Soon fire-new medievals we shall see
Oust the black smithy from its chestnut-tree,
And that hewn down, perhaps, the bee-hive green and vast.

How many times, prouder than king on throne,

Loosed from the village school-dame's A's and B's,
Panting have I the creaky bellows blown,
And watched the pent volcano's red increase,
Then paused to see the ponderous sledge, brought down
By that hard arm voluminous and brown,
From the white iron swarm its golden vanishing bees.

Dear native town! whose choking elms each year
With eddying dust before their time turn gray,
Pining for rain, — to me thy dust is dear;
It glorifies the eve of summer day,
And when the westering sun half sunken burns,
The mote-thick air to deepest orange turns,
The westward horseman rides through clouds of gold away,

So palpable, I've seen those unshorn few,

The six old willows at the causey's end
(Such trees Paul Potter never dreamed nor drew),
Through this dry mist their checkering shadows send,
Striped, here and there, with many a long-drawn thread,
Where streamed through leafy chinks the trembling red,
Past which, in one bright trail, the hang-bird's flashes blend.

Yes, dearer far thy dust than all that e'er,
Beneath the awarded crown of victory,
Gilded the blown Olympic charioteer;
Though lightly prized the ribboned parchments three,
Yet *collegisse juvat,* I am glad
That here what colleging was mine I had, —
It linked another tie, dear native town, with thee!

Nearer art thou than simply native earth,

My dust with thine concedes a deeper tie;
A closer claim thy soil may well put forth,
Something of kindred more than sympathy;
For in thy bounds I reverently laid away
That blinding anguish of forsaken clay,
That title I seemed to have in earth and sea and sky,

That portion of my life more choice to me
(Though brief, yet in itself so round and whole)
Than all the imperfect residue can be; —
The Artist saw his statue of the soul
Was perfect; so, with one regretful stroke.
The earthen model into fragments broke,
And without her the impoverished seasons roll.

THE OAK

What gnarlèd stretch, what depth of shade, is his!
There needs no crown to mark the forest's king;

How in his leaves outshines full summer's bliss!
Sun, storm, rain, dew, to him their tribute bring,
Which he with such benignant royalty
Accepts, as overpayeth what is lent;
All nature seems his vassal proud to be,
And cunning only for his ornament.

How towers he, too, amid the billowed snows,
An unquelled exile from the summer's throne,
Whose plain, uncinctured front more kingly shows,
Now that the obscuring courtier leaves are flown.
His boughs make music of the winter air,
Jewelled with sleet, like some cathedral front
Where clinging snow-flakes with quaint art repair
The dents and furrows of time's envious brunt.

How doth his patient strength the rude March wind

Persuade to seem glad breaths of summer breeze,
And win the soil, that fain would be unkind,
To swell his revenues with proud increase!
He is the gem; and all the landscape wide
(So doth his grandeur isolate the sense)
Seems but the setting, worthless all beside,
An empty socket, were he fallen thence.

So, from oft converse with life's wintry gales,
Should man learn how to clasp with tougher roots
The inspiring earth; how otherwise avails
The leaf-creating sap that sunward shoots?
So every year that falls with noiseless flake
Should fill old scars up on the stormward side,
And make hoar age revered for age's sake,
Not for traditions of youth's leafy pride.

So, from the pinched soil of a churlish fate,
True hearts compel the sap of sturdier growth,
So between earth and heaven stand simply great,

That these shall seem but their attendants both;
For nature's forces with obedient zeal
Wait on the rooted faith and oaken will;
As quickly the pretender's cheat they feel,
And turn mad Pucks to flout and mock him still.

Lord! all Thy works are lessons; each contains
Some emblem of man's all-containing soul;
Shall he make fruitless all thy glorious pains,
Delving within thy grace an eyeless mole?
Make me the least of thy Dodona-grove,
Cause me some message of thy truth to bring,
Speak but a word through me, nor let thy love
Among my boughs disdain to perch and sing.

BEAVER BROOK

Hushed with broad sunlight lies the hill,
And, minuting the long day's loss,
The cedar's shadow, slow and still,
Creeps o'er its dial of gray moss.

Warm noon brims full the valley's cup,
The aspen's leaves are scarce astir;
Only the little mill sends up
Its busy, never-ceasing burr.

Climbing the loose-piled wall that hems
The road along the mill-pond's brink,
From 'neath the arching barberry-stems
My footstep scares the shy chewink.

Beneath a bony buttonwood
The mill's red door lets forth the din;
The whitened miller, dust-imbued,
Flits past the square of dark within.

No mountain torrent's strength is here;
Sweet Beaver, child of forest still,
Heaps its small pitcher to the ear,
And gently waits the miller's will.

Swift slips Undine along the race
Unheard, and then, with flashing bound,
Floods the dull wheel with light and grace,
And, laughing, hunts the loath drudge round.

The miller dreams not at what cost
The quivering millstones hum and whirl,
Nor how for every turn are tost
Armfuls of diamond and of pearl.

But Summer cleared my happier eyes
With drops of some celestial juice,
To see how Beauty underlies,
Forevermore each form of use.

And more; methought I saw that flood,
Which now so dull and darkling steals,
Thick, here and there, with human blood,
To turn the world's laborious wheels.

No more than doth the miller there,
Shut in our several cells, do we
Know with what waste of beauty rare
Moves every day's machinery.

Surely the wiser time shall come
When this fine overplus of might,
No longer sullen, slow, and dumb,
Shall leap to music and to light.

In that new childhood of the Earth
Life of itself shall dance and play,
Fresh blood in Time's shrunk veins make mirth,
And labor meet delight half-way.

THE PRESENT CRISIS

When a deed is done for Freedom, through the broad earth's aching breast
Runs a thrill of joy prophetic, trembling on from east to west,
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels the soul within him climb
To the awful verge of manhood, as the energy sublime
Of a century bursts full-blossomed on the thorny stem of Time.

Through the walls of hut and palace shoots the instantaneous throe,
When the travail of the Ages wrings earth's systems to and fro;
At the birth of each new Era, with a recognizing start,

Nation wildly looks at nation, standing with
mute lips apart,
And glad Truth's yet mightier man-child leaps
beneath the Future's heart.

So the Evil's triumph sendeth, with a terror
and a chill,
Under continent to continent, the sense of com-
ing ill,
And the slave, where'er he cowers, feels his
sympathies with God
In hot tear-drops ebbing earthward, to be
drunk up by the sod,
Till a corpse crawls round unburied, delving
in the nobler clod.

For mankind are one in spirit, and an instinct
bears along,
Round the earth's electric circle, the swift
flash of right or wrong;
Whether conscious or unconscious, yet Human-
ity's vast frame
Through its ocean-sundered fibres feels the
gush of joy or shame: —

In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal claim.

Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or evil side;
Some great cause, God's new Messiah, offering each the bloom or blight,
Parts the goats upon the left hand, and the sheep upon the right,
And the choice goes by forever 'twixt that darkness and that light.

Hast thou chosen, O my people, on whose party thou shalt stand,
Ere the Doom from its worn sandals shakes the dust against our land?
Though the cause of Evil prosper, yet 't is Truth alone is strong,
And, albeit she wander outcast now, I see around her throng
Troops of beautiful, tall angels, to enshield her from all wrong.

Backward look across the ages and the beacon-moments see,
That, like peaks of some sunk continent, jut through Oblivion's sea;
Not an ear in court or market for the low foreboding cry
Of those Crises, God's stern winnowers, from whose feet earth's chaff must fly;
Never shows the choice momentous till the judgment hath passed by.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record
One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word;
Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the Throne, —
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.

We see dimly in the Present what is small and what is great,

Slow of faith how weak an arm may turn the iron helm of fate,
But the soul is still oracular; amid the market's din,
List the ominous stern whisper from the Delphic cave within, —
"They enslave their children's children who make compromise with sin."

Slavery, the earth-born Cyclops, fellest of the giant brood,
Sons of brutish Force and Darkness, who have drenched the earth with blood,
Famished in his self-made desert, blinded by our purer day,
Gropes in yet unblasted regions for his miserable prey; —
Shall we guide his gory fingers where our helpless children play?

Then to side with Truth is noble when we share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 't is prosperous to be just;

Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified,
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they had denied.

Count me o'er earth's chosen heroes, — they were souls that stood alone,
While the men they agonized for hurled the contumelious stone,
Stood serene, and down the future saw the golden beam incline
To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,
By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme design.

By the light of burning heretics Christ's bleeding feet I track,
Toiling up new Calvaries ever with the cross that turns not back,
And these mounts of anguish number how each generation learned

One new word of that grand *Credo* which in
prophet-hearts hath burned
Since the first man stood God-conquered with
his face to heaven upturned.

For Humanity sweeps onward: where to-day
the martyr stands,
On the morrow crouches Judas with the silver
in his hands;
Far in front the cross stands ready and the
crackling fagots burn,
While the hooting mob of yesterday in silent
awe return
To glean up the scattered ashes into History's
golden urn.

'T is as easy to be heroes as to sit the idle
slaves
Of a legendary virtue carved upon our fathers'
graves;
Worshippers of light ancestral make the pres-
ent light a crime;—
Was the Mayflower launched by cowards,
steered by men behind their time?

Turn those tracks toward Past or Future,
that make Plymouth Rock sublime?

They were men of present valor, stalwart old
iconoclasts,
Unconvinced by axe or gibbet that all virtue
was the Past's;
But we make their truth our falsehood, think-
ing that hath made us free,
Hoarding it in mouldy parchments, while our
tender spirits flee
The rude grasp of that great Impulse which
drove them across the sea.

They have rights who dare maintain them;
we are traitors to our sires,
Smothering in their holy ashes Freedom's
new-lit altar-fires;
Shall we make their creed our jailer? Shall
we, in our haste to slay,
From the tombs of the old prophets steal the
funeral lamps away
To light up the martyr-fagots round the pro-
phets of to-day?

New occasions teach new duties; Time makes
ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward, who
would keep abreast of Truth;
Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we our-
selves must Pilgrims be,
Launch our Mayflower, and steer boldly
through the desperate winter sea,
Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's
blood-rusted key.

THE COURTIN'

God makes sech nights, all white an' still
Fur 'z you can look or listen,
Moonshine an' snow on field an' hill,
All silence an' all glisten.

Zekle crep' up quite unbeknown
An' peeked in thru' the winder,
An' there sot Huldy all alone,
With no one nigh to hender.

A fireplace filled the room's one side
With half a cord o' wood in,—

There warn't no stoves till comfort died,
To bake ye to a puddin'.

The wa'nut logs shot sparkles out
Toward the pootiest, bless her!
An' leetle flames danced all about
The chiny on the dresser.

Agin the chimbley crook-necks hung,
An' in amongst 'em rusted
The ole queen's-arm thet gran'ther Young
Fetched back from Concord busted.

The very room, coz she was in,
Seemed warm from floor to ceilin',
An' she looked full ez rosy agin
Ez the apples she was peelin'.

'T was kin' o' kingdom-come to look
On sech a blessed cretur,
A dogrose blushin' to a brook
Ain't modester nor sweeter.

He was six foot o' man, A 1,
Clearn grit an' human natur':

None could n't quicker pitch a ton
Nor dror a furrer straighter.

He'd sparked it with full twenty gals,
Hed squired 'em, danced 'em, druv 'em,
Fust this one, an' then thet, by spells,--
All is, he could n't love 'em.

But long o' her his veins 'ould run
All crinkly like curled maple,
The side she breshed felt full o' sun
Ez a south slope in Ap'il.

She thought no v'ice hed sech a swing
Ez hisn in the choir;
My! when he made Ole Hunderd ring,
She *knowed* the Lord was nigher.

An' she'd blush scarlit, right in prayer
When her new meetin'-bunnet
Felt somehow thru' its crown a pair
O' blue eyes sot upon it.

Thet night, I tell ye, she looked *somet*
She seemed to 've gut a new soul,

For she felt sartin-sure he'd come.
Down to her very shoe-sole.

She heered a foot, an' knowed it tu,
A-raspin' on the scraper, —
All ways to once her feelins flew
Like sparks in burnt-up paper.

He kin'o' l'itered on the mat,
Some doubtfle o' the sekle,
His heart kep' goin' pity-pat,
But hern went pity Zekle.

An' yit she gin her cheer a jerk
Ez though she wished him furder,
An' on her apples kep' to work,
Parin' away like murder.

"You want to see my Pa, I s'pose?"
"Wal . . . no . . . I come designin'" —
"To see my Ma? She's sprinklin' clo'es
Agin to-morrer's i'nin'."

To say why gals acts so or so,
Or don't, would be presumin';

Mebby to mean *yes* an' say *no*
Comes nateral to women.

He stood a spell on one foot fust,
Then stood a spell on t'other.
An' on which one he felt the wust
He could n't ha' told ye nuther.

Says he, "I'd better call agin;"
Says she, "Think likely, Mister:"
That last word pricked him like a pin,
An' . . . Wal, he up an' kist her.

When Ma bimeby upon 'em slips,
Huldy sot pale ez ashes,
All kin' o' smily roun' the lips
An' teary roun' the lashes.

For she was jist the quiet kind
Whose naturs never vary,
Like streams that keep a summer mind
Snowhid in Jenooary.

The blood clost roun' her heart felt glued
Too tight for all expressin',

Tell mother see how metters stood,
An' gin 'em both her blessin'.

Then her red come back like the tide
Down to the Bay o' Fundy,
An' all I know is they was cried
In meetin' come nex' Sunday.

ODE RECITED AT THE HARVARD COMMEMORATION

JULY 21, 1865

I

WEAK-WINGED is song,
Nor aims at that clear-ethered height
Whither the brave deed climbs for light:
We seem to do them wrong,
Bringing our robin's-leaf to deck their hearse
Who in warm life-blood wrote their nobler verse,
Our trivial song to honor those who come
With ears attuned to strenuous trump and drum,
And shaped in squadron-strophes their desire,

Live battle-odes whose lines were steel and fire:
Yet sometimes feathered words are strong,
A gracious memory to buoy up and save
From Lethe's dreamless ooze, the common grave
Of the unventurous throng.

II

To-day our Reverend Mother welcomes back
Her wisest Scholars, those who understood
The deeper teaching of her mystic tome,
And offered their fresh lives to make it good:
No lore of Greece or Rome,
No science peddling with the names of things,
Or reading stars to find inglorious fates,
Can lift our life with wings
Far from Death's idle gulf that for the many waits,
And lengthen out our dates
With that clear fame whose memory sings
In manly hearts to come, and nerves them and dilates:

Nor such thy teaching, Mother of us all!
Not such the trumpet-call
Of thy diviner mood,
That could thy sons entice
From happy homes and toils, the fruitful nest
Of those half-virtues which the world calls best,
Into War's tumult rude;
But rather far that stern device
The sponsors chose that round thy cradle stood
In the dim, unventured wood,
The VERITAS that lurks beneath
The letter's unprolific sheath,
Life of whate'er makes life worth living,
Seed-grain of high emprise, immortal food,
One heavenly thing whereof earth hath the giving.

III

Many loved Truth, and lavished life's best oil
Amid the dust of books to find her,
Content at last, for guerdon of their toil,
With the cast mantle she hath left behind her.

Many in sad faith sought for her,
Many with crossed hands sighed for her;
But these, our brothers, fought for her,
At life's dear peril wrought for her,
So loved her that they died for her,
Tasting the raptured fleetness
Of her divine completeness:
Their higher instinct knew
Those love her best who to themselves are true,
And what they dare to dream of, dare to do;
They followed her and found her
Where all may hope to find,
Not in the ashes of the burnt-out mind,
But beautiful, with danger's sweetness round her.
Where faith made whole with deed
Breathes its awakening breath
Into the lifeless creed,
They saw her plumed and mailed,
With sweet, stern face unveiled,
And all-repaying eyes, look proud on them in death.

IV

Our slender life runs rippling by, and glides
Into the silent hollow of the past;
What is there that abides
To make the next age better for the last?
Is earth too poor to give us
Something to live for here that shall outlive us,—
Some more substantial boon
Than such as flows and ebbs with Fortune's fickle moon?
The little that we see
From doubt is never free;
The little that we do
Is but half-nobly true;
With our laborious hiving
What men call treasure, and the gods call dross,
Life seems a jest of Fate's contriving,
Only secure in every one's conniving,
A long account of nothings paid with loss,
Where we poor puppets, jerked by unseen wires,

After our little hour of strut and rave,
With all our pasteboard passions and desires,
Loves, hates, ambitions, and immortal fires,
Are tossed pell-mell together in the grave.
Ah, there is something here
Unfathomed by the cynic's sneer,
Something that gives our feeble light
A high immunity from Night,
Something that leaps life's narrow bars
To claim its birthright with the hosts of heaven;
A seed of sunshine that doth leaven
Our earthly dulness with the beams of stars,
And glorify our clay
With light from fountains elder than the Day;
A conscience more divine than we,
A gladness fed with secret tears,
A vexing, forward-reaching sense
Of some more noble permanence;
A light across the sea,
Which haunts the soul and will not let it be,
Still glimmering from the heights of undegenerate years.

V

Whither leads the path
To ampler fates that leads?
Not down through flowery meads,
To reap an aftermath
Of youth's vainglorious weeds,
But up the steep, amid the wrath
And shock of deadly hostile creeds,
Where the world's best hope and stay
By battle's flashes gropes a desperate way,
And every turf the fierce foot clings to bleeds.
Peace hath her not ignoble wreath,
Ere yet the sharp, decisive word
Lights the black lips of cannon, and the sword
Dreams in its easeful sheath;
But some day the live coal behind the thought,
Whether from Baäl's stone obscene,
Or from the shrine serene
Of God's pure altar brought,
Bursts up in flame; the war of tongue and pen
Learns with what deadly purpose it was fraught,
And, helpless in the fiery passion caught,

Shakes all the pillared state with shock of men:
Some day the soft Ideal that we wooed
Confronts us fiercely, foe-beset, pursued,
And cries reproachful: "Was it, then, my praise,
And not myself was loved? Prove now thy truth;
I claim of thee the promise of thy youth;
Give me thy life, or cower in empty phrase,
The victim of thy genius, not its mate!"
Life may be given in many ways,
And loyalty to Truth be sealed
As bravely in the closet as the field,
So generous is Fate;
But then to stand beside her,
When craven churls deride her,
To front a lie in arms and not to yield,—
This shows, methinks, God's plan
And measure of a stalwart man,
Limbed like the old heroic breeds,
Who stands self-poised on manhood's solid earth,
Not forced to frame excuses for his birth,
Fed from within with all the strength he needs.

VI

Such was he, our Martyr-Chief,
Whom late the Nation he had led,
With ashes on her head,
Wept with the passion of an angry grief:
Forgive me, if from present things I turn
To speak what in my heart will beat and burn,
And hang my wreath on his world-honored urn.
Nature, they say, doth dote,
And cannot make a man
Save on some worn-out plan,
Repeating us by rote:
For him her Old-World mould aside she threw,
And, choosing sweet clay from the breast
Of the unexhausted West,
With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,
Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true.
How beautiful to see
Once more a shepherd of mankind indeed,
Who loved his charge, but never loved to lead;
One whose meek flock the people joyed to be,

Not lured by any cheat of birth,
But by his clear-grained human worth,
And brave old wisdom of sincerity!
They knew that outward grace is dust;
They could not choose but trust
In that sure-footed mind's unfaltering skill,
And supple-tempered will
That bent like perfect steel to spring again and thrust.
Nothing of Europe here,
Or, then, of Europe fronting morn-ward still,
Ere any names of Serf and Peer
Could Nature's equal scheme deface;
Here was a type of the true elder race,
And one of Plutarch's men talked with us face to face.
I praise him not; it were too late;
And some innative weakness there must be
In him who condescends to victory
Such as the Present gives, and cannot wait,
Safe in himself as in a fate.
So always firmly he:
He knew to bide his time,
And can his fame abide,

Still patient in his simple faith sublime,
Till the wise years decide.
Great captains, with their guns and drums,
Disturb our judgment for the hour,
But at last silence comes;
These all are gone, and, standing like a tower,
Our children shall behold his fame,
The kindly-earnest, brave, foreseeing man,
Sagacious, patient, dreading praise, not blame,
New birth of our new soil, the first American.

VII

Long as man's hope insatiate can discern
Or only guess some more inspiring goal
Outside of Self, enduring as the pole,
Along whose course the flying axles burn
Of spirits bravely-pitched, earth's manlier brood;
Long as below we cannot find
The meed that stills the inexorable mind;
So long this faith to some ideal Good,
Under whatever mortal names it masks,

Freedom, I aw, Country, this ethereal mood
That thanks the Fates for their severer tasks,
Feeling its challenged pulses leap,
While others skulk in subterfuges cheap,
And, set in Danger's van, has all the boon it asks,
Shall win man's praise and woman's love,
Shall be a wisdom that we set above
All other skills and gifts to culture dear,
A virtue round whose forehead we enwreathe
Laurels that with a living passion breathe
When other crowns are cold and soon grow sere.
What brings us thronging these high rites to pay,
And seal these hours the noblest of our year,
Save that our brothers found this better way?

VIII

We sit here in the Promised Land
That flows with Freedom's honey and milk,
But 't was they won it, sword in hand,
Making the nettle danger soft for us as silk.

We welcome back our bravest and our best; —
Ah me! not all! some come not with the rest,
Who went forth brave and bright as any here!
I strive to mix some gladness with my strain,
But the sad strings complain,
And will not please the ear;
I sweep them for a pæan, but they wane
Again and yet again
Into a dirge, and die away in pain.
In these brave ranks I only see the gaps,
Thinking of dear ones whom the dumb turf wraps,
Dark to the triumph which they died to gain:
Fitlier may others greet the living,
For me the past is unforgiving;
I with uncovered head
Salute the sacred dead,
Who went, and who return not. — Say not so!
'Tis not the grapes of Canaan that repay,
But the high faith that failed not by the way;
Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave;
No ban of endless night exiles the brave;

And to the saner mind
We rather seem the dead that stayed behind.
Blow, trumpets, all your exultations blow!
For never shall their aureoled presence lack:
I see them muster in a gleaming row,
With ever-youthful brows that nobler show;
We find in our dull road their shining track;
In every nobler mood
We feel the orient of their spirit glow,
Part of our life's unalterable good,
Of all our saintlier aspiration;
They come transfigured back,
Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,
Beautiful evermore, and with the rays
Of morn on their white Shields of Expectation!

IX

Who now shall sneer?
Who dare again to say we trace
Our lines to a plebeian race?
Roundhead and Cavalier!
Dreams are those names erewhile in battle loud;
Forceless as is the shadow of a cloud,

They live but in the ear:
That is best blood that hath most iron in 't,
To edge resolve with, pouring without stint
For what makes manhood dear.
Tell us not of Plantagenets,
Hapsburgs, and Guelfs, whose thin bloods crawl
Down from some victor in a border-brawl!
How poor their outworn coronets,
Matched with one leaf of that plain civic wreath
Our brave for honor's blazon shall bequeath,
Through whose desert a rescued Nation sets
Her heel on treason, and the trumpet hears
Shout victory, tingling Europe's sullen ears
With vain resentments and more vain regrets!

x

Not in anger, not in pride,
Pure from passion's mixture rude,
Ever to base earth allied,
But with far-heard gratitude,
Still with heart and voice renewed,

To heroes living and dear martyrs dead,
The strain should close that consecrates our brave.
Lift the heart and lift the head!
Lofty be its mood and grave,
Not without a martial ring,
Not without a prouder tread
And a peal of exultation:
Little right has he to sing
Through whose heart in such an hour
Beats no march of conscious power,
Sweeps no tumult of elation!
'Tis no Man we celebrate,
By his country's victories great,
A hero half, and half the whim of Fate,
But the pith and marrow of a Nation
Drawing force from all her men,
Highest, humblest, weakest, all, —
Pulsing it again through them,
Till the basest can no longer cower,
Feeling his soul spring up divinely tall,
Touched but in passing by her mantle-hem.
Come back, then, noble pride, for 'tis her dower!

How could poet ever tower,
If his passions, hopes, and fears,
If his triumphs and his tears,
Kept not measure with his people?
Boom, cannon, boom to all the winds and waves!
Clash out, glad bells, from every rocking steeple!
Banners, advance with triumph, bend your staves!
And from every mountain-peak
Let beacon-fire to answering beacon speak,
Katahdin tell Monadnock, Whiteface he,
And so leap on in light from sea to sea,
Till the glad news be sent
Across a kindling continent,
Making earth feel more firm and air breathe braver:
"Be proud! for she is saved, and all have helped to save her!
She that lifts up the manhood of the poor,
She of the open soul and open door,
With room about her hearth for all mankind!

The helm from her bold front she doth unbind,
Sends all her handmaid armies back to spin,
And bids her navies hold their thunders in.
No challenge sends she to the elder world,
That looked askance and hated; a light scorn
Plays on her mouth, as round her mighty knees
She calls her children back, and waits the morn
Of nobler day, enthroned between her subject seas."

XI

Bow down, dear Land, for thou hast found release!
Thy God, in these distempered days,
Hath taught thee the sure wisdom of His ways,
And through thine enemies hath wrought thy peace!
Bow down in prayer and praise!
O Beautiful! my Country! ours once more!

Smoothing thy gold of war-dishevelled hair
O'er such sweet brows as never other wore,
And letting thy set lips,
Freed from wrath's pale eclipse,
The rosy edges of their smile lay bare,
What words divine of lover or of poet
Could tell our love and make thee know it,
Among the Nations bright beyond compare?
What were our lives without thee?
What all our lives to save thee?
We reck not what we gave thee;
We will not dare to doubt thee,
But ask whatever else, and we will dare!

NOTES

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

1. **The Musing organist:** There is a peculiar felicity in this musical introduction. The poem is like an improvisation, and was indeed composed much as a musician improvises, with swift grasp of the subtle suggestions of musical tones. It is a dream, an elaborate and somewhat tangled metaphor, full of hidden meaning for the accordant mind, and the poet appropriately gives it a setting of music, the most symbolic of all the arts. It is an allegory, like any one of the adventures in the *Fairie Queen,* and from the very beginning the reader must be alive to the symbolic meaning, upon which Lowell, unlike Spenser, places chief emphasis, rather than upon the narrative. Compare the similar musical device in Browning's *Abt Vogler* and Adelaide Proctor's *Lost Chord.*

6. **Theme:** The theme, subject, or underlying thought of the poem is expressed in line 12 below:

"We Sinais climb and know it not;"

or more comprehensively in the group of four lines of which this is the conclusion. The organist's fingers wander listlessly over the keys at first; then come forms and figures from out of dreamland over the bridge of his careless melody, and gradually the vision takes consistent and expressive shape. So the poet comes upon his central subject, or theme, shaped from his wandering thought and imagination.

7. **Auroral flushes:** Like the first faint glimmerings of light in the East that point out the pathway of the rising

sun, the uncertain, wavering outlines of the poet's vision precede the perfected theme that is drawing near.

9. **Not only around our infancy, etc.:** The allusion is to Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*, especially these lines:

> " Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
> Shades of the prison-house begin to close
> Upon the growing Boy,
> But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
> He sees it in his joy;
> The Youth, who daily farther from the east
> Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
> And by the vision splendid
> Is on his way attended;
> At length the Man perceives it die away,
> And fade into the light of common day."

As Lowell's central theme is so intimately associated with that of Wordsworth's poem, if not directly suggested by it, the two poems should be read together and compared. Lowell maintains that " heaven lies about us " not only in our infancy, but at all times, if only we have the soul to comprehend it.

12. **We Sinais climb, etc.:** Mount Sinai was the mountain in Arabia on which Moses talked with God (*Exodus* xix, xx). God's miracles are taking place about us all the time, if only we can emancipate our souls sufficiently to see them. From out of our materialized daily lives we may rise at any moment, if we will, to ideal and spiritual things. In a letter to his nephew Lowell says: " This same name of God is written all over the world in little phenomena that occur under our eyes every moment, and I confess that I feel very much inclined to hang my head with Pizarro when I cannot translate those hieroglyphics into my own vernacular." (*Letters*, I, 164).

Compare the following passage in the poem *Bibliolatres:*

> " If thou hast wanderings in the wilderness
> And find'st not Sinai, 't is thy soul is poor;
> There towers the Mountain of the Voice no less,
> Which whoso seeks shall find, but he who bends,
> Intent on manna still and mortal ends,
> Sees it not, neither hears its thundered lore."

15. **Prophecies:** Prophecy is not only prediction, but also any inspired discourse or teaching. Compare the following lines from the poem *Freedom*, written the same year:

" Are we, then, wholly fallen? Can it be
That thou, North wind, that from thy mountains bringest
Their spirit to our plains, and thou, blue sea,
Who on our rocks thy wreaths of freedom flingest,
As on an altar, — can it be that ye
Have wasted inspiration on dead ears,
Dulled with the too familiar clank of chains? "

At the end of this poem Lowell gives his view of " fallen and traitor lives." He speaks of the " boundless future " of our country —

> " Ours if we be strong;
> Or if we shrink, better remount our ships
> And, fleeing God's express design, trace back
> The hero-freighted Mayflower's prophet-track
> To Europe entering her blood-red eclipse."

While reading *Sir Launfal* the fact must be kept in mind that Lowell was at the time of writing the poem filled with the spirit of freedom and reform, and was writing fiery articles in prose for the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, expressing his bitter indignation at the indifference and lukewarmness of the Northern people on the subject of slavery.

17. **Druid wood:** The Druids were the aged priests of the Celts, who performed their religious ceremonies in the

forests, especially among oaks, which were peculiarly sacred to them. Hence the venerable woods, like the aged priests, offer their benediction. Every power of nature, the winds, the mountain, the wood, the sea, has a symbolic meaning which we should be able to interpret for our inspiration and uplifting. Read Bryant's *A Forest Hymn*.

18. **Benedicite:** An invocation of blessing. Imperative form of the Latin *benedicere*, to bless. Longfellow speaks of the power of songs that —

> " Come like the benediction
> That follows after prayer."

19–20. Compare these lines with the ninth strophe of Wordsworth's *Ode*. The " inspiring sea " is Wordsworth's " immortal sea." Both poets rejoice that some of the impulses and ideals of youth are kept alive in old age.

21. **Earth gets its price, etc.:** Notice the special meaning given to *Earth* here, in contrast with *heaven* in line 29. Here again the thought is suggested by Wordsworth's *Ode*, sixth strophe:

> " Earth fills our lap with pleasures of her own."

23. **Shrives:** The priest shrives one when he hears confession and grants absolution.

25. **Devil's booth:** Expand this metaphor and unfold its application to every-day life.

27. **Cap and bells:** The conventional dress of the court fool, or jester, of the Middle Ages, and, after him, of the stage clown, consisted of the " fool's cap " and suit of motley, ornamented with little tinkling bells.

28. **Bubbles we buy, etc.:** This line, as first published, had " earn " for " buy."

31. This line read originally: " There is no price set," etc. The next line began with " And."

32–95. This rapturous passage descriptive of June is unquestionably the most familiar and most celebrated piece

of nature poetry in our literature. It is not only beautiful and inspiring in its felicitous phrasings of external nature, but it is especially significant as a true expression of the heart and soul of the poet himself. It was always " the high-tide of the year " with Lowell in June, when his spirits were in fine accord with the universal joy of nature. Wherever in his poetry he refers to spring and its associations, he always expresses the same ecstasy of delight. The passage must be compared with the opening lines of *Under the Willows* (which he at first named *A June Idyll*):

" June is the pearl of our New England year.
Still a surprisal, though expected long,
Her coming startles. Long she lies in wait,
Makes many a feint, peeps forth, draws coyly back,
Then, from some southern ambush in the sky,
With one great gush of blossom storms the world," etc.

And in *Sunthin' in the Pastoral Line* the coming of spring is delightfully pictured:

" Our Spring gets everything in tune
An' gives one leap from April into June," etc.

In a letter written in June, 1867, Lowell says: " There never *is* such a season, and that shows what a poet God is. He says the same thing over to us so often and always new. Here I've been reading the same poem for near half a century, and never had a notion what the buttercup in the third stanza meant before."

It is worth noting that Lowell's happy June corresponds to May in the English poets, as in Wordsworth's *Ode:*

" With the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday."

In New England where " Northern natur " is " slow an' apt to doubt,"

"May is a pious fraud of the almanac."

or as Hosea Biglow says:

"Half our May is so awfully like May n't,
'T would rile a Shaker or an evrige saint."

41. The original edition has "grasping" instead of "groping."

42. **Climbs to a soul, etc.:** In his intimate sympathy with nature, Lowell endows her forms with conscious life, as Wordsworth did, who says in *Lines Written in Early Spring:*

"And 't is my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes."

So Lowell in *The Cathedral* says:

"And I believe the brown earth takes delight
In the new snow-drop looking back at her,
To think that by some vernal alchemy
It could transmute her darkness into pearl."

So again he says in *Under the Willows:*

"I in June am midway to believe
A tree among my far progenitors,
Such sympathy is mine with all the race,
Such mutual recognition vaguely sweet
There is between us."

It must be remembered that this humanizing of nature is an attitude toward natural objects characteristic only of modern poetry, being practically unknown in English poetry before the period of Burns and Wordsworth.

45. **The cowslip startles:** Surprises the eye with its bright patches of green sprinkled with golden blossoms. *Cowslip* is the common name in New England for the marsh-marigold, which appears early in spring in low wet meadows, and

furnishes not infrequently a savory "mess of greens" for the farmer's dinner-table.

46. Compare *Al Fresco*, lines 34–39:

> "The rich, milk-tingeing buttercup
> Its tiny polished urn holds up,
> Filled with ripe summer to the edge,
> The sun in his own wine to pledge."

56. **Nice:** Delicately discriminating.

62. This line originally read "because God so wills it."

71. **Maize has sprouted:** There is an anxious period for the farmer after his corn is planted, for if the spring is "backward" and the weather cold, his seed may decay in the ground before sprouting.

73. So in *Sunthin' in the Pastoral Line*, when robin-redbreast sees the "hossches'nuts' leetle hands unfold" he knows —

> "Thet arter this ther' 's only blossom-snows;
> So, choosin' out a handy crotch an' spouse,
> He goes to plast'rin' his adobë house."

77. Note the happy effect of the internal rhyme in this line.

93. **Healed with snow:** Explain the appropriateness of the metaphor.

94–95. Is the transition here from the prelude to the story abrupt, or do the preceding lines lead up to it appropriately? Just why does Sir Launfal now remember his vow? Do these lines introduce the "theme" that the musing organist has finally found in dreamland, or the symbolic illustration of his theme?

97. **Richest mail:** The knight's coat of mail was usually of polished steel, often richly decorated with inlaid patterns of gold and jewels. To serve his high purpose, Sir Launfal brings forth his most precious treasures.

99. **Holy Grail:** According to medieval legend, the Sangreal was the cup or chalice, made of emerald, which was used by Christ at the last supper, and in which Joseph of Arimathea caught the last drops of Christ's blood when he was taken down from the cross. The quest of the Grail is the central theme of the Arthurian Romances. Tennyson's *Holy Grail* should be read, and the student should also be made familiar with the beautiful versions of the legend in Abbey's series of mural paintings in the Boston Public Library, and in Wagner's *Parsifal.*

103. **On the rushes:** In ancient halls and castles the floors were commonly strewn with rushes. In *Taming of the Shrew*, when preparing for the home-coming of Petruchio and his bride, Grumio says: "Is supper ready, the house trimmed, rushes strewed, cobwebs swept?"

109. **The crows flapped, etc.:** Suggestive of the quiet, heavy flight of the crow in a warm day. The beginning and the end of the stanza suggest drowsy quiet. The vision begins in this stanza. The nature pictures are continued, but with new symbolical meaning.

114. **Like an outpost of winter:** The cold, gloomy castle stands in strong contrast to the surrounding landscape filled with the joyous sunshine of summer. So the proud knight's heart is still inaccessible to true charity and warm human sympathy. So aristocracy in its power and pride stands aloof from democracy with its humility and aspiration for human brotherhood. This stanza is especially figurative. The poet is unfolding the main theme, the underlying moral purpose, of the whole poem, but it is still kept in vague, dreamy symbolism.

116. **North Countree:** The north of England, the home of the border ballads. This form of the word "countree," with accent on the last syllable, is common in the old ballads. Here it gives a flavor of antiquity in keeping with the story.

122. **Pavilions tall:** The trees, as in line 125, the broad green tents. Note how the military figure, beginning with

"outposts," in line 115, is continued and developed throughout the stanza, and reverted to in the word "siege" in the next stanza.

130. **Maiden knight:** A young, untried, unpracticed knight. The expression occurs in Tennyson's *Sir Galahad*. So "maiden mail" below.

137. **As a locust-leaf:** The small delicate leaflets of the compound locust-leaf seem always in a "lightsome" movement.

138. The original edition has "unscarred mail."

138–139. Compare the last lines of Tennyson's *Sir Galahad:*

> "By bridge and ford, by park and pale,
> All-armed I ride, whate'er betide,
> Until I find the Holy Grail."

147. **Made morn:** Let in the morning, or came into the full morning light as the huge gate opened.

148. **Leper:** Why did the poet make the crouching beggar a leper?

152. For "gan shrink" the original has "did shrink."

155. **Bent of stature:** Criticise this phrase.

158. **So he tossed . . . in scorn:** This is the turning point of the moral movement of the story. Sir Launfal at the very beginning makes his fatal mistake; his noble spirit and lofty purposes break down with the first test. He refuses to see a brother in the loathsome leper; the light and warmth of human brotherhood had not yet entered his soul, just as the summer sunshine had not entered the frowning castle. The regeneration of his soul must be worked out through wandering and suffering. Compare the similar plot of the *Ancient Mariner*.

163. **No true alms:** The alms must also be in the heart.

164. Originally "He gives nothing but worthless gold."

166. **Slender mite:** An allusion to the widow's "two mites." (*Luke* xxi, 1–4.)

168. **The all-sustaining Beauty:** The all-pervading spirit of God that unites all things in one sympathetic whole. This

divinity in humanity is its highest beauty. In *The Oak* Lowell says:

> " Lord! all thy works are lessons; each contains
> Some emblem of man's all-containing soul."

172. **A god goes with it:** The god-like quality of real charity, of heart to heart sympathy. In a letter written a little after the composition of this poem Lowell speaks of love and freedom as being " the sides which Beauty presented to him then."

172. **Store:** Plenty, abundance.

175. **Summers:** What is gained by the use of this word instead of winters?

176. **Wold:** A high, open and barren field that catches the full sweep of the wind. The " wolds " of north England are like the " downs " of the south.

181. **The little brook:** In a letter written in December, 1848, Lowell says: " Last night I walked to Watertown over the snow with the new moon before me and a sky exactly like that in Page's evening landscape. Orion was rising behind me, and, as I stood on the hill just before you enter the village, the stillness of the fields around me was delicious, broken only by the tinkle of a little brook which runs too swiftly for Frost to catch it. My picture of the brook in *Sir Launfal* was drawn from it." See the poem *Beaver Brook* (originally called *The Mill*), and the winter picture in *An Indian-Summer Reverie*, lines 148–196.

184. **Groined:** Groined arches are formed by the intersection of two arches crossing at any angle, forming a ribbed vault; a characteristic feature of Gothic architecture.

190. **Forest-crypt:** The crypt of a church is the basement, filled with arched pillars that sustain the building. The cavern of the brook, as the poet will have us imagine it, is like this subterranean crypt, where the pillars are like trees and the groined arches like interlacing branches, decorated with frost leaves. The poet seems to have had in mind

throughout the description the interior of the Gothic cathedrals, as shown by the many suggestive terms used, " groined," " crypt," " aisles," " fretwork," and " carvings."

193. **Fretwork:** The ornamental work carved in intricate patterns, in oak or stone, on the ceilings of old halls and churches.

195. **Sharp relief:** When a figure stands out prominently from the marble or other material from which it is cut, it is said to be in " high relief," in distinction from " low relief," *bas relief.*

196. **Arabesques:** Complicated patterns of interwoven foliage, flowers and fruits, derived from Arabian art. Lowell had undoubtedly studied many times the frost designs on the window panes.

201. **That crystalled the beams, etc.:** That caught the beams of moon and sun as in a crystal. For " that " the original edition has " which."

204. **Winter-palace of ice:** An allusion, apparently, to the ice-palace built by the Empress of Russia, Catherine II, " most magnificent and mighty freak. The wonder of the North," Cowper called it. Compare Lowell's description of the frost work with Cowper's similar description in *The Task*, in the beginning of Book V.

205–210. **'Twas as if every image, etc.:** Note the exquisite fancy in these lines. The elves have preserved in the ice the pictures of summer foliage and clouds that were mirrored in the water as models for another summer.

211. **The hall:** In the old castles the hall was always the large banqueting room, originally the common living room. Here all large festivities would take place.

213. **Corbel:** A bracket-like support projecting from a wall from which an arch springs or on which a beam rests. The poet has in mind an ancient hall in which the ceiling is the exposed woodwork of the roof.

214. This line at first read: " With the lightsome," etc. Why did Lowell's refining taste strike out " the "?

216. **Yule-log:** The great log, sometimes the root of a tree, burned in the huge fireplace on Christmas eve, with special ceremonies and merrymakings. It was lighted with a brand preserved from the last year's log, and connected with its burning were many quaint superstitions and customs. The celebration is a survival through our Scandinavian ancestors of the winter festival in honor of the god Thor. Herrick describes it trippingly in one of his songs:

"Come, bring with a noise,
My merrie, merrie boys,
The Christmas log to the firing;
While my good dame, she
Bids ye all be free,
And drink to your heart's desiring."

219. **Like a locust, etc.:** Only one who has heard both sounds frequently can appreciate the close truth of this simile. The metaphors and similes in this stanza are deserving of special study.

226. **Harp:** Prof. William Vaughn Moody questions whether "the use of Sir Launfal's hair as a 'harp' for the wind to play a Christmas carol on" is not "a bit grotesque." Does the picture of Sir Launfal in these two stanzas belong in the Prelude or in the story in Part Second?

230. **Carol of its own:** Contrasted with the carols that are being sung inside the castle.

231. **Burden:** The burden or refrain is the part repeated at the end of each stanza of a ballad or song, expressing the main theme or sentiment. *Still* is in the sense of always, ever.

233. **Seneschal:** An officer of the castle who had charge of feasts and ceremonies, like the modern Lord Chamberlain of the King's palace. Note the effect of the striking figure in this line.

237. **Window-slits:** Narrow perpendicular openings in

the wall, serving both as windows and as loopholes from which to fire at an enemy.

238. **Build out its piers:** The beams of light are like the piers or jetties that extend out from shore into the water to protect ships. Such piers are also built out to protect the shore from the violent wash of the ocean. The poet may possibly, however, have had in mind the piers of a bridge that support the arches and stand against the sweep of the stream.

243. In this line instead of "the weaver Winter" the original has "the frost's swift shuttles." Was the change an improvement?

244. **A single crow:** Note the effect of introducing this lone crow into the bleak landscape.

250. It must not be forgotten that this old Sir Launfal is only in the dream of the real Sir Launfal, who is still lying on the rushes within his own castle. As the poor had often been turned away with cold, heartless selfishness, so he is now turned away from his own "hard gate."

251. **Sate:** The use of this archaic form adds to the antique flavor of the poem. So with the use of the word "tree" for cross, in line 281 below. Lowell was passionately fond of the old poets and the quaint language of the early centuries of English literature, and loved to introduce into his own poetry words and phrases from these sources. Of this habit he says:

> "If some small savor creep into my rhyme
> Of the old poets, if some words I use,
> Neglected long, which have the lusty thews
> Of that gold-haired and earnest-hearted time,
> Whose loving joy and sorrow all sublime
> Have given our tongue its starry eminence, —
> It is not pride, God knows, but reverence
> Which hath grown in me since my childhood's prime."

254. **Recked:** Cared for.

255. **Surcoat:** A long flowing garment worn over the armor, on which was "emblazoned" the coat of arms. If the knight were a crusader, a red cross was embroidered thus on the surcoat.

256. **The sign:** The sign of the cross, the symbol of humility and love. This is the first real intimation, the keynote, of the transformation that has taken place in Sir Launfal's soul.

259. **Idle mail:** Useless, ineffectual protection. This figure carries us back to the "gilded mail," line 131, in which Sir Launfal "flashed forth" at the beginning of his quest. The poem is full of these minor antitheses, which should be traced by the student.

264–272. **He sees, etc.:** This description is not only beautiful in itself, but it serves an important purpose in the plan of the poem. It is a kind of condensation or symbolic expression of Sir Launfal's many years of wandering in oriental lands. The hint or brief outline is given, which must be expanded by the imagination of the reader. Otherwise the story would be inconsistent and incomplete. Notice how deftly the picture is introduced.

272. **Signal of palms:** A group of palm trees seen afar off over the desert is a welcome signal of an oasis with water for the relief of the suffering traveler. Some critics have objected that so small a spring could not have "waved" so large a signal!

273. Notice the abruptness with which the leper is here introduced, just as before at the beginning of the story. The vision of "a sunnier clime" is quickly swept away. The shock of surprise now has a very different effect upon Sir Launfal.

275. This line at first read: "But Sir Launfal sees naught save the grewsome thing."

278. **White:** "And, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow." (*Numbers* xii, 10.)

279. **Desolate horror:** The adjective suggests the out-

cast, isolated condition of lepers. They were permitted no contact with other people. The ten lepers who met Jesus in Samaria "stood afar off and lifted up their voices."

281. **On the tree:** On the cross. "Whom they slew and hanged on a tree, Him God raised up the third day." (*Acts* x, 39.) This use of the word is common in early literature, especially in the ballads.

285. See *John* xx, 25–27.

287. **Through him:** The leper. Note that the address is changed in these two lines. Compare *Matthew* xxv, 34–40. This gift to the leper differs how from the gift in Part First?

291. **Leprosie:** The antiquated spelling is used for the perfect rhyme and to secure the antique flavor.

292. **Girt:** The original word here was "caged."

294. **Ashes and dust:** Explain the metaphor. Compare with "sackcloth and ashes." See *Esther* iv, 3; *Jonah* iii, 6; *Job* ii, 8.

300, 301. The figurative character of the lines is emphasized by the word "soul" at the end. The miracle of Cana seems to have been in the poet's mind.

304, 305. The leper is transfigured and Christ himself appears in the vision of the sleeping Sir Launfal.

307. **The Beautiful Gate:** "The gate of the temple which is called Beautiful," where Peter healed the lame man. (*Acts* iii, 2.)

308. **Himself the Gate:** See *John* x, 7, 9: "I am the door."

310. **Temple of God:** "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (*I Corinthians* iii, 16, 17; vi, 19.)

312. This line at first began with "which."

313. **Shaggy:** Is this term applicable to Sir Launfal's present condition, or is the whole simile carried a little beyond the point of true likeness?

314. **Softer:** Lowell originally wrote "calmer" here. The change increased the effect of the alliteration. Was it otherwise an improvement?

315. **Lo, it is I:** *John* vi, 20.

316. **Without avail:** Was Sir Launfal's long quest entirely without avail? Compare the last lines of Tennyson's *Holy Grail*, where Arthur complains that his knights who went upon the Holy Quest have followed "wandering fires, lost in the quagmire," and "leaving human wrongs to right themselves."

320, 321. *Matthew* xxvi, 26–28; *Mark* xiv, 22–24.

322. **Holy Supper:** The Last Supper of Christ and his disciples, upon which is instituted the communion service of the churches. The spirit of the Holy Supper, the communion of true brotherhood, is realized when the Christlike spirit triumphs in the man. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (*Matthew* xxv, 40.)

326. The original has "bestows" for "gives."

328. **Swound:** The antiquated form of *swoon*.

332, 333. Interpret the lines. Did the poet have in mind the spiritual armor described in *Ephesians* vi, 11–17?

336. **Hangbird:** The oriole, so called from its hanging nest; one of Lowell's most beloved "garden acquaintances" at Elmwood. In a letter he says: "They build a pendulous nest, and so flash in the sun that our literal rustics call them fire hang-birds." See the description in *Under the Willows* beginning:

"My oriole, my glance of summer fire."

See also the charming prose description in *My Garden Acquaintance*.

338. **Summer's long siege at last is o'er:** The return to this figure rounds out the story and serves to give unity to the plan of the poem. The siege is successful, summer has conquered and entered the castle, warming and lighting its cold, cheerless interior.

342, 343. Is Lowell expressing here his own convictions about ideal democracy?

THE SHEPHERD OF KING ADMETUS

Apollo, the god of music, having given offense to Zeus, was condemned to serve for the space of one year as a shepherd under Admetus, King of Thessaly. This is one of the most charming of the myths of Apollo, and has been often used by the poets. Remarking upon this poem, and others of its period, Scudder says that it shows "how persistently in Lowell's mind was present this aspect of the poet which makes him a seer," a recognition of an "all-embracing, all-penetrating power which through the poet transmutes nature into something finer and more eternal, and gives him a vantage ground from which to perceive more truly the realities of life." Compare with this poem *An Incident in a Railroad Car.*

5. **Lyre:** According to mythology, Apollo's lyre was a tortoise-shell strung with seven strings.

8. **Fagots for a witch:** The introduction of this witch element into a Greek legend rather mars the consistency of the poem. Lowell finally substituted for the stanza the following:

> "Upon an empty tortoise-shell
> He stretched some chords, and drew
> Music that made men's bosoms swell
> Fearless, or brimmed their eyes with dew."

HEBE

Lowell suggests in this dainty symbolical lyric his conception of the poet's inspiration. Hebe was cup-bearer to the gods of Olympus, in Greek mythology, and poured for them their nectar. She was also the goddess of eternal youth. By an extension of the symbolism she becomes goddess of the eternal joyousness of the poetic gift. The "influence fleet" is the divine afflatus that fills the creative mind of the poet.

But Pegasus cannot be made to work in harness at will. True inspiration comes only in choice moments. Coy Hebe cannot be wooed violently. Elsewhere he says of the muse:

> " Harass her not; thy heat and stir
> But greater coyness breed in her."

" Follow thy life," he says, " be true to thy best self, then Hebe will bring her choicest ambrosia." That is —

> " Make thyself rich, and then the Muse
> Shall court thy precious interviews,
> Shall take thy head upon her knee,
> And such enchantment lilt to thee,
> That thou shalt hear the life-blood flow
> From farthest stars to grass-blades low."

TO THE DANDELION

Four stanzas were added to this poem after its first appearance, the sixth, seventh, eighth and tenth, but in the finally revised edition these were cut out, very likely because Lowell regarded them as too didactic. Indeed the poem is complete and more artistic without them.

" Of Lowell's earlier pieces," says Stedman, " the one which shows the finest sense of the poetry of nature is that addressed *To the Dandelion*. The opening phrase ranks with the selectest of Wordsworth and Keats, to whom imaginative diction came intuitively, and both thought and language are felicitous throughout. This poem contains many of its author's peculiar beauties and none of his faults; it was the outcome of the mood that can summon a rare spirit of art to express the gladdest thought and most elusive feeling."

6. **Eldorado**: The land of gold, supposed to be somewhere in South America, which the European adventurers, especially the Spaniards, were constantly seeking in the sixteenth century.

26. Sybaris: An ancient Greek colony in southern Italy whose inhabitants were devoted to luxury and pleasure.

52–54. Compare *Sir Launfal.*

MY LOVE

Lowell's love for Maria White is beautifully enshrined in this little poem. He wrote it at about the time of their engagement. While it is thus personal in its origin, it is universal in its expression of ideal womanhood, and so has a permanent interest and appeal. In its strong simplicity and crystal purity of style, it is a little masterpiece. Though filled with the passion of his new and beautiful love, its movement is as calm and artistically restrained as that of one of Wordsworth's best lyrics.

THE CHANGELING

This is one of the tender little poems that refer to the death of the poet's daughter Blanche, which occurred in March, 1847. *The First Snow-fall* and *She Came and Went* embody the same personal grief. When sending the former to his friend Sydney H. Gay for publication, he wrote: "May you never have the key which shall unlock the whole meaning of the poem to you." Underwood, in his *Biographical Sketch* says that "friends of the poet, who were admitted to the study in the upper chamber, remember the pairs of baby shoes that hung over a picture-frame." The volume in which this poem first appeared contained this dedication — "To the ever fresh and happy memory of our little Blanche this volume is reverently dedicated."

A changeling, according to folk-lore and fairy tale, is a fairy child that the fairies substitute for a human child that they have stolen. The changeling was generally sickly, shrivelled and in every way repulsive. Here the poet reverses the superstition, substituting the angels for the mis-

chievous fairies, who bring an angel child in place of the lost one. Whittier has a poem on the same theme, *The Changeling.*

29. **Zingari:** The Gypsies — suggested by "wandering angels" above — who wander about the earth, and also sometimes steal children, according to popular belief.

52. **Bliss it:** A rather violent use of the word, not recognized by the dictionaries, but nevertheless felicitous.

AN INDIAN-SUMMER REVERIE

Lowell's love of Elmwood and its surroundings finds expression everywhere in his writings, both prose and verse, but nowhere in a more direct, personal manner than in this poem. He was not yet thirty when the poem was written, and Cambridge could still be called a "village," but the familiar scenes already had their retrospective charms, which increased with the passing years. Later in life he again celebrated his affection for this home environment in *Under the Willows.*

"There are poetic lines and phrases in the poem," says Scudder, "and more than all the veil of the season hangs tremulously over the whole, so that one is gently stirred by the poetic feeling of the rambling verses; yet, after all, the most enduring impression is of the young man himself in that still hour of his life, when he was conscious, not so much of a reform to which he must put his hand, as of the love of beauty, and of the vague melancholy which mingles with beauty in the soul of a susceptible poet. The river winding through the marshes, the distant sound of the ploughman, the near chatter of the chipmunk, the individual trees, each living its own life, the march of the seasons flinging lights and shadows over the broad scene, the pictures of human life associated with his own experience, the hurried survey of his village years — all these pictures float before his vision; and then, with an abruptness which is like the choking of

the singer's voice with tears, there wells up the thought of the little life which held as in one precious drop the love and faith of his heart."

1. **Visionary tints:** The term Indian summer is given to almost any autumnal period of exceptionally quiet, dry and hazy weather. In America these characteristic features of late fall were especially associated with the middle West, at a time when the Indians occupied that region.

5. **Hebe:** Hebe was cup-bearer to the gods at their feasts on Olympus. Like Hebe, Autumn fills the sloping fields, rimmed round with distant hills, with her own delicious atmosphere of dreamy and poetic influence.

11. **My own projected spirit:** It seems to the poet that his own spirit goes out to the world, steeping it in reverie like his own, rather than receiving the influence from nature's mood.

25. **Gleaning Ruth:** For the story of Ruth's gleaning in the fields of Boaz, see the book of *Ruth*, ii.

38. **Chipmunk:** Lowell at first had "squirrel" here, which would be inconsistent with the "underground fastness." And yet, are chipmunks seen up in walnut trees?

40. This line originally read, "with a chipping bound." *Cheeping* is chirping, or giving the peculiar cluck that sounds like "cheep," or "chip."

45. **Faint as smoke, etc.:** The farmer burns the stubble and other refuse of the season before his "fall plowing."

46. **The single crow, etc.:** Note the full significance of this detail of the picture. Compare Bryant's *Death of the Flowers:*

"And from the wood-top calls the crow through all the gloomy day."

50. Compare with this stanza the pretty little poem, *The Birch Tree.*

68. **Lavish of their long-hid gold:** The chestnut leaves.

it will be remembered, turn to a bright golden yellow in autumn. These descriptions of autumn foliage are all as true as beautiful.

73. **Maple-swamps:** We generally speak of the swamp-maple, which grows in low ground, and has particularly brilliant foliage in autumn.

82. **Tangled blackberry:** This is the creeping blackberry, of course, which every one remembers whose feet have been caught in its prickly tangles.

91. **Martyr oak:** The oak is surrounded with the blazing foliage of the ivy, like a burning martyr.

99. **Dear marshes:** The Charles River near Elmwood winds through broad salt marshes, the characteristic features of which Lowell describes with minute and loving fidelity

127. **Bobolink:** If Lowell had a favorite bird, it was the bobolink, although the oriole was a close competitor for his praises. In one of his letters he says: "I think the bobolink the best singer in the world, even undervaluing the lark and the nightingale in the comparison." And in another he writes: "That liquid tinkle of theirs is the true fountain of youth if one can only drink it with the right ears, and I always date the New Year from the day of my first draught. Messer Roberto di Lincoln, with his summer alb over his shoulders, is the true chorister for the bridals of earth and sky. There is no bird that seems to me so thoroughly happy as he, so void of all *arrière pensée* about getting a livelihood. The robin sings matins and vespers somewhat conscientiously, it seems to me — makes a business of it and pipes as it were by the yard — but Bob squanders song like a poet."

Compare the description in *Sunthin' in the Pastoral Line:*

> "'Nuff said, June's bridesman, poet o' the year,
> Gladness on wings, the bobolink, is here;
> Half hid in tip-top apple-blooms he swings,

Or climbs aginst the breeze with quiverin' wings,
Or, givin' way to 't in a mock despair,
Runs down, a brook o' laughter, thru the air."

See also the opening lines of *Under the Willows* for another description full of the ecstasy of both bird and poet. The two passages woven together appear in the essay *Cambridge Thirty Years Ago*, as a quotation. An early poem on *The Bobolink*, delightful and widely popular, was omitted from later editions of his poems by Lowell, perhaps because to his maturer taste the theme was too much moralized in his early manner. "Shelley and Wordsworth," says Mr. Brownell, "have not more worthily immortalized the skylark than Lowell has the bobolink, its New England congener."

134. **Another change:** The description now returns to the marshes.

147. **Simond's hill:** In the essay *Cambridge Thirty Years Ago* Lowell describes the village as seen from the top of this hill.

159–161. An allusion to the Mexican War, against which Lowell was directing the satire of the *Biglow Papers*.

174–182. Compare the winter pictures in Whittier's *Snowbound*.

177. **Formal candles:** Candles lighted for some form or ceremony, as in a religious service.

192. **Stonehenge:** Stonehenge on Salisbury plain in the south of England is famous for its huge blocks of stone now lying in confusion, supposed to be the remains of an ancient Druid temple.

207. **Sanding:** The continuance of the metaphor in "higher waves" are "whelming." With high waves the sand is brought in upon the land, encroaching upon its limits.

209. **Muses' factories:** The buildings of Harvard College.

218. **House-bespotted swell:** Lowell notes with some resentment the change from nature's simple beauties to

the pretentiousness of wealth shown in incongruous buildings.

220. **Cits:** Contracted from citizens. During the French Revolution, when all titles were abolished, the term *citizen* was applied to every one, to denote democratic simplicity and equality.

223. **Gentle Allston:** Washington Allston, the celebrated painter, whom Lowell describes as he remembered him in the charming essay *Cambridge Thirty Years Ago*.

225. **Virgilium vidi tantum:** I barely saw Virgil — caught a glimpse of him — a phrase applied to any passing glimpse of greatness.

227. **Undine-like:** Undine, a graceful water nymph, is the heroine of the charming little romantic story by De la Motte Fouqué.

234. **The village blacksmith:** See Longfellow's famous poem, *The Village Blacksmith*. The chestnut was cut down in 1876. An arm-chair made from its wood still stands in the Longfellow house, a gift to Longfellow from the Cambridge school children.

254. **Six old willows:** These much-loved trees afforded Lowell a subject for a later poem *Under the Willows*, in which he describes particularly one ancient willow that had been spared, he "knows not by what grace." by the ruthless "New World subduers" —

> "One of six, a willow Pleiades,
> The seventh fallen, that lean along the brink
> Where the steep upland dips into the marsh."

In a letter written twenty years after the *Reverie* to J. T. Fields, Lowell says: "My heart was almost broken yesterday by seeing nailed to *my* willow a board with these words on it, 'These trees for sale.' The wretch is going to peddle them for firewood! If I had the money, I would buy the piece of ground they stand on to save them — the dear friends of a lifetime."

255. **Paul Potter:** One of the most famous of the Dutch painters of the seventeenth century, notable for the strong realism of his work.

264. **Collegisse juvat:** The full sentence, in the first ode of Horace, reads, "Curriculo pulverem Olympicum collegisse juvat." (It is a pleasure to have collected the dust of Olympus on one's chariot wheels.) The allusion is to the Olympic games, the most celebrated festival of Greece. Lowell puns upon the word *collegisse* with his own coinage, which may have the double meaning of *going to college* and *collecting.*

272. **Blinding anguish:** An allusion to the death of his little daughter Blanche. See *The Changeling, The First Snow-fall,* and *She Came and Went.*

THE OAK

11. **Uncinctured front:** The forehead no longer encircled with a crown.

13–16. There is a little confusion in the figures here, the cathedral part of the picture being a little far fetched.

40. **Mad Pucks:** Puck is the frolicsome, mischief-making spirit of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

45. **Dodona grove:** The grove of oaks at Dodona was the seat of a famous Greek oracle, whose responses were whispered through the murmuring foliage of the trees.

BEAVER BROOK

Beaver Brook at Waverley was a favorite resort of Lowell's and it is often mentioned in his writings. In summer and winter it was the frequent goal of his walks. The poem was at first called *The Mill.* It was first published in the *Anti-Slavery Standard,* and to the editor, Sidney H. Gay, Lowell wrote: — "Don't you like the poem I sent you last week? I was inclined to think pretty well of it, but I have not seen

it in print yet. The little mill stands in a valley between one of the spurs of Wellington Hill and the main summit, just on the edge of Waltham. It is surely one of the loveliest spots in the world. It is one of my lions, and if you will make me a visit this spring, I will take you up to hear it roar, and I will show you 'the oaks' — the largest, I fancy, left in the country."

21. **Undine:** In mythology and romance, Undine is a water-spirit who is endowed with a soul by her marriage with a mortal. The *race* is the watercourse conducted from the dam in an open trough or "penstock" to the wheel.

45. **In that new childhood of the Earth:** This poem was written a few weeks after the *Vision of Sir Launfal* was published, and it therefore naturally partakes of its idealism.

THE PRESENT CRISIS

This poem was written in 1844. The discussion over the annexation of Texas was absorbing public attention. The anti-slavery party opposed annexation, believing that it would strengthen the slave-holding interests, and for the same reason the South was urging the scheme. Lowell wrote several very strong anti-slavery poems at this time, *To W. L. Garrison, Wendell Phillips, On the Death of C. T. Torrey*, and others, which attracted attention to him as a new and powerful ally of the reform party. "These poems," says George William Curtis, "especially that on *The Present Crisis*, have a Tyrtæan resonance, a stately rhetorical rhythm, that make their dignity of thought, their intense feeling, and picturesque imagery, superbly effective in recitation. They sang themselves on every anti-slavery platform."

While the poem was inspired by the political struggle of the time, which Lowell regarded as a crisis in the history of our national honor and progress, its chief strength is due to the fact that its lofty sentiment is universal in its appeal, and not applicable merely to temporal and local conditions

17. **Round the earth's electric circle, etc.:** This prophetic figure was doubtless suggested by the first telegraph line, which Samuel F. B. Morse had just erected between Baltimore and Washington.

37. **The Word:** "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (*John* i, 1.)

44. **Delphic cave:** The oracle at Delphi was the most famous and authoritative among the Greeks. The priestess who voiced the answers of the god was seated in a natural fissure in the rocks.

46. **Cyclops:** The Cyclopes were brutish giants with one eye who lived in caverns and fed on human flesh, if the opportunity offered. Lowell is recalling in these lines the adventure of Ulysses with the Cyclops, in the ninth book of Homer's *Odyssey*.

64. **Credo:** Latin, I believe: the first word in the Latin version of the Apostles' Creed, hence used for *creed*.

THE COURTIN'

This poem first appeared as "a short fragment of a pastoral," in the introduction to the First Series of the *Biglow Papers*. It is said to have been composed merely to fill a blank page, but its popularity was so great that Lowell expanded it to twice its original length, and finally printed it as a kind of introduction to the Second Series of the *Biglow Papers*. It first appeared, however, in its expanded form in a charitable publication, *Autograph Leaves of Our Country's Authors*, reproduced in facsimile from the original manuscript.

"This bucolic idyl," says Stedman, "is without a counterpart; no richer juice can be pressed from the wild grape of the Yankee soil." Greenslet thinks that this poem is "perhaps the most nearly perfect of his poems."

17. Crooknecks: Crookneck squashes.

19. **Ole queen's-arm:** The old musket brought from the Concord fight in 1775.

32. To draw a straight furrow when plowing is regarded as evidence of a skilful farmer.

36. **All is:** The truth is, "all there is about it."

37. **Long o' her:** Along of her, on account of her.

40. **South slope:** The slope of a hill facing south catches the spring sunshine.

43. **Ole Hunderd:** Old Hundred is one of the most familiar of the old hymn tunes.

58. Somewhat doubtful as to the sequel.

94. **Bay o' Fundy:** The Bay of Fundy is remarkable for its high and violent tides, owing to the peculiar conformation of its banks.

96. **Was cried:** The "bans" were cried, the announcement of the engagement in the church, according to the custom of that day.

THE COMMEMORATION ODE

The poem was dedicated "To the ever sweet and shining memory of the ninety-three sons of Harvard College who have died for their country in the war of nationality." The text of the poem is here given as Lowell first published it in 1865. He afterward made a few verbal changes, and added one new strophe after the eighth. There is a special interest in studying the ode in the form in which it came rushing from the poet's brain.

1–14. The deeds of the poet are weak and trivial compared with the deeds of heroes. They live their high ideals and die for them. Yet the gentle words of the poet may sometimes save unusual lives from that oblivion to which all common lives are destined.

5. **Robin's-leaf:** An allusion to the ballad of the *Babes in the Wood.*

9. **Squadron-strophes:** The term *strophe* originally was

applied to a metrical form that was repeated in a certain established way, like the *strophe* and *antistrophe* of the Greek ode, as sung by a divided chorus; it is now applied to any stanza form. The poem of heroism is a "battle-ode," whose successive stanzas are marching squadrons, whose verses are lines of blazing guns, and whose melody is the strenuous music of "trump and drum."

13. **Lethe's dreamless ooze:** Lethe is the river of oblivion in Hades; its slimy depths of forgetfulness are not even disturbed by dreams.

14. **Unventurous throng:** The vast majority of commonplace beings who neither achieve nor attempt deeds of "high emprise."

16. **Wisest Scholars:** Many students who had returned from the war were in the audience, welcomed back by their revered mother, their Alma Mater.

20. **Peddling:** Engaging in small, trifling interests. Lowell's attitude toward science is that of Wordsworth, when he speaks of the dry-souled scientist as one who is all eyes and no heart, "One that would peep and botanize Upon his mother's grave."

21. The pseudo-science of astrology, seeking to tell commonplace fortunes by the stars.

25–26. **Clear fame:** Compare Milton's *Lycidas:*

> "Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
> . . . . . .
> To scorn delights and live laborious days."

32. **Half-virtues:** Is Lowell disparaging the virtues of peace and home in comparison with the heroic virtues of war? Or are these "half-virtues" contrasted with the loftier virtue, the devotion to Truth?

34. **That stern device:** The seal of Harvard College, chosen by its early founders, bears the device of a shield with the word *Ve-ri-tas* (truth) upon three open books.

46. **Sad faith:** Deep, serious faith, or there may be a

slight touch of irony in the word, with a glance at the gloomy faith of early puritanism and its "lifeless creed" (l. 62).

62. **Lifeless creed:** Compare Tennyson's:

> "Ancient form
> Thro' which the spirit breathes no more."

73. The tide of the ocean in its flow and ebb is under the influence of the moon. To get the sense of the metaphor, "fickle" must be read with "Fortune" — unless, perchance, we, like Juliet, regard the moon as the "inconstant moon."

81. To protect one's self everyone connives against everyone else. Compare *Sir Launfal*, l. 11. Instead of climbing Sinais we "cringe and plot."

82. Compare *Sir Launfal*, l. 26. The whole passage, ll. 76–87, is a distant echo of the second and third stanzas of *Sir Launfal*.

83–85. **Puppets:**. The puppets are the pasteboard actors in the Punch and Judy show, operated by unseen wires.

84. An echo of *Macbeth*, V, 5:

> "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more."

97. **Elder than the Day:** Elder than the first Day. "And God called the light Day," etc. (*Genesis* i, 5.) We may have light from the divine fountains.

110–114. In shaping this elaborate battle metaphor, one can easily believe the poet to have had in mind some fierce mountain struggle during the war, such as the battle of Lookout Mountain.

111. **Creeds:** Here used in the broad sense of convictions, principles, beliefs.

115–118. The construction is faulty in these lines. The two last clauses should be co-ordinated. The substance of the meaning is: Peace has her wreath, while the cannon are silent and while the sword slumbers. Lowell's attention

was called to this defective passage by T. W. Higginson, and he replied: "Your criticism is perfectly just, and I am much obliged to you for it — though I might defend myself, I believe, by some constructions even looser in some of the Greek choruses. But on the whole, when I have my choice, I prefer to make sense." He then suggested an emendation, which somehow failed to get into the published poem:

"Ere yet the sharp, decisive word
Redden the cannon's lips, and while the sword."

120. **Baäl's stone obscene:** Human sacrifices were offered on the altars of Baäl. (*Jeremiah* xix, 5.)

147–205. This strophe was not in the ode as delivered, but was written immediately after the occasion, and included in the published poem. "It is so completely imbedded in the structure of the ode," says Scudder, "that it is difficult to think of it as an afterthought. It is easy to perceive that while the glow of composition and of recitation was still upon him, Lowell suddenly conceived this splendid illustration, and indeed climax of the utterance, of the Ideal which is so impressive in the fifth stanza . . . Into these threescore lines Lowell has poured a conception of Lincoln, which may justly be said to be to-day the accepted idea which Americans hold of their great President. It was the final expression of the judgment which had slowly been forming in Lowell's own mind."

In a letter to Richard Watson Gilder, Lowell says: "The passage about Lincoln was not in the ode as originally recited, but added immediately after. More than eighteen months before, however, I had written about Lincoln in the *North American Review* — an article that pleased him. I *did* divine him earlier than most men of the Brahmin caste."

It is a singular fact that the other great New England poets, Longfellow, Whittier, and Holmes, had almost nothing to say about Lincoln.

150. **Wept with the passion,** etc.: An article in the *Atlantic*

Monthly for June, 1865, began with this passage: "The funeral procession of the late President of the United States has passed through the land from Washington to his final resting-place in the heart of the prairies. Along the line of more than fifteen hundred miles his remains were borne, as it were, through continued lines of the people; and the number of mourners and the sincerity and unanimity of grief was such as never before attended the obsequies of a human being; so that the terrible catastrophe of his end hardly struck more awe than the majestic sorrow of the people."

170. **Outward grace is dust:** An allusion to Lincoln's awkward and rather unkempt outward appearance.

173. **Supple-tempered will:** One of the most pronounced traits of Lincoln's character was his kindly, almost femininely gentle and sympathetic spirit. With this, however, was combined a determination of steel.

175–178. **Nothing of Europe here:** There was nothing of Europe in him, or, if anything, it was of Europe in her early ages of freedom before there was any distinction of slave and master, groveling Russian Serf and noble Lord or Peer.

180. **One of Plutarch's men:** The distinguished men of Greece and Rome whom Plutarch immortalized in his *Lives* are accepted as types of human greatness.

182. **Innative:** Inborn, natural.

187. **He knew to bide his time:** He knew how to bide his time, as in Milton's *Lycidas*, "He knew himself to sing." Recall illustrations of Lincoln's wonderful patience and faith.

198. **The first American:** In a prose article, Lowell calls him "The American of Americans." Compare Tennyson's "The last great Englishman," in the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*. Stanza IV of Tennyson's ode should be compared with this Lincoln stanza.

202. **Along whose course,** etc.: Along the course leading to the "inspiring goal." The conjunction of the words "pole" and "axles" easily leads to a confusion of metaphor in the passage. The imagery is from the ancient chariot races

232. **Pæan:** A pæan, originally a hymn to Apollo, usually of thanksgiving, is a song of triumph, any loud and joyous song.

236. **Dear ones:** Underwood says in his biography of Lowell: "In the privately printed edition of the poem the names of eight of the poet's kindred are given. The nearest in blood are the nephews, General Charles Russell Lowell, killed at Winchester, Lieutenant James Jackson Lowell, at Seven Pines, and Captain William Lowell Putnam, at Ball's Bluff. Another relative was the heroic Colonel Robert G. Shaw, who fell in the assault on Fort Wagner."

As a special memorial of Colonel Shaw, Lowell wrote the poem, *Memoriae Positum.* With deep tenderness he refers to his nephews in "*Mr. Hosea Biglow to the Editor of the Atlantic Monthly*":

"Why, hain't I held 'em on my knee?
Did n't I love to see 'em growin',
Three likely lads ez wal could be,
Hahnsome an' brave an' not tu knowin'?
I set an' look into the blaze
Whose natur', jes' like theirn, keeps climbin',
Ez long 'z it lives, in shinin' ways,
An' half despise myself for rhymin'.

Wut's words to them whose faith an' truth
On War's red techstone rang true metal,
Who ventered life an' love an' youth
For the gret prize o' death in battle?
To him who, deadly hurt, agen
Flashed on afore the charge's thunder,
Tippin' with fire the bolt of men
Thet rived the Rebel line asunder?"

243. When Moses sent men to "spy out" the Promised Land, they reported a land that "floweth with milk and honey," and they "came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut

down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates and of the figs" (*Numbers* xiii.)

245. Compare the familiar line in Gray's *Elegy:*

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

and Tennyson's line, in the *Ode to the Duke of Wellington:*

"The path of duty was the way of glory."

In a letter to T. W. Higginson, who was editing the *Harvard Memorial Biographies,* in which he was to print the ode, Lowell asked to have the following passage inserted at this point:

"Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave,
But through those constellations go
That shed celestial influence on the brave.
If life were but to draw this dusty breath
That doth our wits enslave,
And with the crowd to hurry to and fro,
Seeking we know not what, and finding death,
These did unwisely; but if living be,
As some are born to know,
The power to ennoble, and inspire
In other souls our brave desire
For fruit, not leaves, of Time's immortal tree,
These truly live, our thought's essential fire,
And to the saner," etc.

Lowell's remark in *The Cathedral,* that "second thoughts are prose," might be fairly applied to this emendation. Fortunately, the passage was never inserted in the ode.

255. **Orient:** The east, morning; hence youth, aspiration, hope. The figure is continued in l. 271.

262. **Who now shall sneer?** In a letter to Mr. J. B. Thayer, who had criticized this strophe, Lowell admits "that there is a certain narrowness in it as an expression of

the popular feeling as well as my own. I confess I have never got over the feeling of wrath with which (just after the death of my nephew Willie) I read in an English paper that nothing was to be hoped of an army officered by tailors' apprentices and butcher boys." But Lowell asks his critic to observe that this strophe "leads naturally" to the next, and "that I there justify" the sentiment.

265. **Roundhead and Cavalier:** In a general way, it is said that New England was settled by the Roundheads, or Puritans, of England, and the South by the Cavaliers or Royalists.

272–273. **Plantagenets:** A line of English kings, founded by Henry II, called also the House of Anjou, from their French origin. The *House of Hapsburg* is the Imperial family of Austria. The *Guelfs* were a great political party in the Middle Ages, in Italy, representing the Pope in the bitter struggles with the *Ghibellines*, who represented the Emperor.

323. With this passage read the last two stanzas of *Mr. Hosea Biglow to the Editor of the Atlantic Monthly*, beginning:

> "Come, Peace! not like a mourner bowed
> For honor lost and dear ones wasted,
> But proud, to meet a people proud,
> With eyes that tell of triumphs tasted!"

328. **Helm:** The helmet, the part of ancient armor for protecting the head, used here as the symbol of war.

343. Upon receiving the news that the war was ended, Lowell wrote to his friend, Charles Eliot Norton: "The news, my dear Charles, is from Heaven. I felt a strange and tender exaltation. I wanted to laugh and I wanted to cry, and ended by holding my peace and feeling devoutly thankful. There is something magnificent in having a country to love."

EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

The following questions are taken from recent examination papers of the Examination Board established by the Association of Schools and Colleges in the Middle States and Maryland, and of the Regents of the State of New York. Generally only one question on *The Vision of Sir Launfal* is included in the examination paper for each year.

Under what circumstances did the "vision" come to Sir Launfal? What was the vision? What was the effect upon him?

What connection have the preludes in the *Vision of Sir Launfal* with the main divisions which they precede? What is their part in the poem as a whole?

Contrast Sir Launfal's treatment of the leper at their first meeting with his treatment at their second.

1. Describe a scene from the *Vision of Sir Launfal.*

2. Describe the hall of the castle as Sir Launfal saw it on Christmas eve.

> "The soul partakes the season's youth . . .
> What wonder if Sir Launfal now
> Remembered the keeping of his vow?"

Give the meaning of these lines, and explain what you think is Lowell's purpose in the preface from which they are taken. Give the substance of the corresponding preface to the other part of the poem, and account for the difference between the two.

Describe the scene as it might have appeared to one standing just outside the castle gate, as Sir Launfal emerged from his castle in his search for the Holy Grail.

Compare the *Ancient Mariner* and the *Vision of Sir Launfal* with regard to the representation of a moral idea in each.

Explain the meaning of Sir Launfal's vision and show how it affected his conduct.

Describe an ideal summer day as portrayed in the *Vision of Sir Launfal.*

Quote at least ten lines.

Discuss, with illustrations, Lowell's descriptions in the *Vision of Sir Launfal,* touching on *two* of the following points: — (*a*) beauty, (*b*) vividness, (*c*) attention to details.

Write a description of winter as given in Part Second.

Outline in tabular form the story of Sir Launfal's search for the Holy Grail; be careful to include in your outline the time, the place, the leading characters, and the leading events in their order.

PART THREE

BRYANT, EMERSON, HOLMES, WHITMAN

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

Probably no American poet, except Longfellow, has written more stanzas or lines that are on the tips of people's tongues than William Cullen Bryant. The last stanza of "To a Waterfowl," the couplet—

> "Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,
> Spink, spank, spink,"—

the long drooping line, "The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year," and "The groves were God's first temples" are examples of Bryant's poetry that everybody knows. Many other favorite bits of his verse could be cited.

Bryant seems like an elder American poet. The most familiar portrait shows him wearing a large gray beard, and we are wont to think of him as a benevolent old gentleman who had the best of taste, a friendly manner, and the spirit of poetry. Yet one of his best known poems, "Thanatopsis," was written during his eighteenth year, and most of his poetry that boys and girls like was written before he reached middle age. Perhaps one reason why people think of him as an elderly man is because he is really the pioneer American poet; American poetry may be said to have begun with the publication of "Thanatopsis."

Like Emerson, William Cullen Bryant was a sympathetic lover of the outdoor world; his choicest poems are mostly transcripts of the impressions which birds and flowers and sky and air made upon him. He says himself that his "Ode to a Waterfowl" was founded on a real incident of his life. And so with his other nature poems.

They were not written from the library, as the phrase is, like Longfellow's descriptive outdoor poems, but rather represented Bryant's intimate outdoor communion with nature. One of his best-liked poems, "The Death of the Flowers," besides expressing the love of nature is also an exquisite expression of the poet's grief at the death of his young sister.

The nearest approach to mirthful verse that Bryant ever made is "Robert of Lincoln," which is particularly delightful because of its imitative sound effects.

There is a certain calm benignity and poise about Bryant's poetry that reminds one of his great English contemporary, Wordsworth. Bryant feels a moral lesson nearly always in his communings with nature, and has the habit of expressing his moral lesson like a preacher. At the close of Bryant's poems there is usually, as it were, a personal exhortation to better living in some particular respect.

Yet though this tendency to moralize makes some readers hesitate to rank Bryant very high as a true poet, it is certain that he represents the best traditions of American poetry. Like most of the poets who have been widely popular in America, he stands for simple, clean living and high thinking. As editor and principal owner of a New York newspaper, *The Evening Post*, he was prominently and favorably before the public for nearly fifty years. He continues popular after the lapse of three-quarters of a century since the writing of some of his best poems.

TO A WATERFOWL

WHITHER, midst falling dew
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, dimly seen against the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean-side?

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast —
The desert and illimitable air —
Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere,
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end;
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reeds shall bend,
Soon, o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply has sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

THANATOPSIS

To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language; for his gayer hours
She has the voice of gladness, and a smile
And eloquence of beauty, and she glides
Into his darker musings, with a mild
And healing sympathy, that steals away
Their sharpness, ere he is aware. When thoughts

Of the last bitter hour come like a blight
Over thy spirit, and sad images
Of the stern agony, and shroud, and pall,
Make thee to shudder, and grow sick at heart; —
Go forth, under the open sky, and list
To Nature's teachings, while from all around —
Earth and her waters, and the depths of air —
Comes a still voice —

Yet a few days, and thee
The all-beholding sun shall see no more
In all his course; nor yet, in the cold ground,
Where thy pale form was laid, with many tears,
Nor in the embrace of ocean, shall exist
Thy image. Earth, that nourished thee, shall claim
Thy growth, to be resolved to earth again,
And, lost each human trace, surrendering up
Thine individual being, shalt thou go
To mix forever with the elements,
To be a brother to the insensible rock
And to the sluggish clod, which the rude swain
Turns with his share, and treads upon. The oak
Shall send his roots abroad, and pierce thy mould.

Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish

Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world — with kings,
The powerful of the earth — the wise, the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulchre. The hills
Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, — the vales
Stretching in pensive quietness between;
The venerable woods — rivers that move
In majesty, and the complaining brooks
That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,
Old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste, —
Are but the solemn decorations all
Of the great tomb of man. The golden sun,
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,
Are shining on the sad abodes of death,
Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread
The globe are but a handful of the tribes
That slumber in its bosom. — Take the wings
Of morning, pierce the Barcan wilderness,
Or lose thyself in the continuous woods
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound
Save his own dashings — yet the dead are there:
And millions in those solitudes, since first
The flight of years began, have laid them down
In their last sleep — the dead reign there alone.

So shalt thou rest, and what if thou withdraw
In silence from the living, and no friend
Take note of thy departure? All that breathe
Will share thy destiny. The gay will laugh
When thou art gone, the solemn brood of care
Plod on, and each one as before will chase
His favorite phantom; yet all these shall leave
Their mirth and their employments, and shall come
And make their bed with thee. As the long train
Of ages glides away, the sons of men,
The youth in life's fresh spring, and he who goes
In the full strength of years, matron and maid,
The speechless babe, and the gray-headed man —
Shall one by one be gathered to thy side,
By those who in their turn shall follow them.

So live, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

TO THE FRINGED GENTIAN

Thou blossom bright with autumn dew,
And colored with the heaven's own blue,
That openest when the quiet light
Succeeds the keen and frosty night,

Thou comest not when violets lean
O'er wandering brooks and springs unseen,
Or columbines, in purple dressed,
Nod o'er the ground-bird's hidden nest.

Thou waitest late and com'st alone,
When woods are bare and birds are flown,
And frosts and shortening days portend
The aged year is near his end.

Then doth thy sweet and quiet eye
Look through its fringes to the sky,
Blue — blue — as if that sky let fall
A flower from its cerulean wall.

I would that thus, when I shall see
The hour of death draw near to me,
Hope, blossoming within my heart,
May look at heaven as I depart.

THE DEATH OF THE FLOWERS

THE melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year,
Of wailing winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and sere.
Heaped in the hollows of the grove, the autumn leaves lie dead;
They rustle to the eddying gust, and to the rabbit's tread;
The robin and the wren are flown, and from the shrubs the jay,
And from the wood-top calls the crow through all the gloomy day.

Where are the flowers, the fair young flowers, that lately sprang and stood
In brighter light and softer airs, a beauteous sisterhood?
Alas! they all are in their graves, the gentle race of flowers
Are lying in their lowly beds, with the fair and good of ours.

The rain is falling where they lie, but the cold November rain
Calls not from out the gloomy earth the lovely ones again.

The wind-flower and the violet, they perished long ago,
And the brier-rose and the orchis died amid the summer glow;
But on the hills the golden-rod, and the aster in the wood,
And the yellow sun-flower by the brook in autumn beauty stood,
Till fell the frost from the clear cold heaven, as falls the plague on men,
And the brightness of their smile was gone, from upland, glade, and glen.
And now, when comes the calm mild day, as still such days will come,
To call the squirrel and the bee from out their winter home;
When the sound of dropping nuts is heard, though all the trees are still,
And twinkle in the smoky light the waters of the rill,

The south wind searches for the flowers whose
fragrance late he bore,
And sighs to find them in the wood and by the stream
no more.

And then I think of one who in her youthful beauty
died,
The fair meek blossom that grew up and faded by my
side.
In the cold moist earth we laid her, when the forests
cast the leaf,
And we wept that one so lovely should have a life
so brief:
Yet not unmeet it was that one, like that young
friend of ours,
So gentle and so beautiful, should perish with the
flowers.

A FOREST HYMN

The groves were God's first temples. Ere man
learned
To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave
And spread the roof above them — ere he framed
The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood

Amid the cool and silence he knelt down
And offered to the Mightiest solemn thanks
And supplication. For his simple heart
Might not resist the sacred influence
Which, from the stilly twilight of the place
And from the gray old trunks that high in heaven
Mingled their mossy boughs and from the sound
Of the invisible breath that swayed at once
All their green tops, stole over him and bowed
His spirit with the thought of boundless power
And inaccessible majesty. Ah, why
Should we, in the world's riper years, neglect
God's ancient sanctuaries and adore
Only among the crowd and under roofs
That our frail hands have raised? Let me, at least,
Here in the shadow of this aged wood
Offer one hymn — thrice happy if it find
Acceptance in His ear.

Father, thy hand
Hath reared these venerable columns, thou
Didst weave this verdant roof. Thou didst look down
Upon the naked earth, and, forthwith, rose
All these fair ranks of trees. They, in thy sun,
Budded, and shook their green leaves in thy breeze,

And shot toward heaven. The century-living crow
Whose birth was in their tops grew old and died
Among their branches, till at last they stood
As now they stand, massy and tall and dark,
Fit shrine for humble worshiper to hold
Communion with his Maker. These dim vaults,
These winding aisles, of human pomp or pride
Report not. No fantastic carvings show
The boast of our vain race to change the form
Of thy fair works. But thou art here — thou fill'st
The solitude. Thou art in the soft winds
That run along the summit of these trees
In music; thou art in the cooler breath
That from the inmost darkness of the place
Comes, scarcely felt; the barky trunks, the ground,
The fresh moist ground, are all instinct with thee.
Here is continual worship; — Nature, here,
In the tranquility that thou dost love,
Enjoys thy presence. Noiselessly, around,
From perch to perch, the solitary bird
Passes; and yon clear spring, that, midst its herbs,
Wells softly forth and wandering steeps the roots
Of half the mighty forest, tells no tale
Of all the good it does. Thou hast not left
Thyself without a witness, in the shades,
Of thy perfections. Grandeur, strength, and grace

Are here to speak of thee. This mighty oak —
By whose immovable stem I stand and seem
Almost annihilated — not a prince,
In all that proud old world beyond the deep,
E'er wore his crown as loftily as he
Wears the green coronal of leaves with which
Thy hand has graced him. Nestled at his root
Is beauty, such as blooms not in the glare
Of the broad sun. That delicate forest flower,
With scented breath and look so like a smile,
Seems, as it issues from the shapeless mould,
An emanation of the indwelling Life,
A visible token of the upholding Love,
That are the soul of this great universe.

My heart is awed within me when I think
Of the great miracle that still goes on,
In silence, round me — the perpetual work
Of thy creation, finished, yet renewed
Forever. Written on thy works I read
The lesson of thy own eternity.
Lo! all grow old and die — but see again,
How on the faltering footsteps of decay
Youth presses — ever gay and beautiful youth
In all its beautiful forms. These lofty trees
Wave not less proudly that their ancestors

Moulder beneath them. Oh, there is not lost
One of earth's charms: upon her bosom yet,
After the flight of untold centuries,
The freshness of her far beginning lies
And yet shall lie. Life mocks the idle hate
Of his arch-enemy Death — yea, seats himself
Upon the tyrant's throne — the sepulchre,
And of the triumphs of his ghastly foe
Makes his own nourishment. For he came forth
From thine own bosom, and shall have no end.

There have been holy men who hid themselves
Deep in the woody wilderness and gave
Their lives to thought and prayer, till they outlived
The generation born with them, nor seemed
Less aged than the hoary trees and rocks
Around them; — and there have been holy men
Who deemed it were not well to pass life thus.
But let me often to these solitudes
Retire, and in thy presence reassure
My feeble virtue. Here its enemies,
The passions, at thy plainer footsteps shrink
And tremble and are still. O God! when thou
Dost scare the world with tempests, set on fire
The heavens with falling thunderbolts, or fill,
With all the waters of the firmament,

The swift dark whirlwind that uproots the woods
And drowns the villages; when at thy call
Uprises the great deep and throws himself
Upon the continent, and overwhelms
Its cities — who forgets not, at the sight
Of these tremendous tokens of thy power,
His pride, and lays his stripes and follies by?
Oh, from these sterner aspects of thy face
Spare me and mine, nor let us need the wrath
Of the mad unchained elements to teach
Who rules them. Be it ours to meditate,
In these calm shades, thy milder majesty,
And to the beautiful order of thy works
Learn to conform the order of our lives.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

The grave and dignified philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, shows in his poetry something of the serious dignity which distinguishes his prose. His subjects are never trivial; his treatment of them is always worthy. He writes of nature, of philosophy, of classic lore, of historic events, of the poetic gift, of his own sorrows. In nothing that he writes in poetry is there a note of ecstatic joy or profound dejection. Though he may be thrilled by his enjoyment of the visible outdoor world, he still writes with something of meditative restraint. No poet has given a finer interpretation of what Nature can mean to a sensitive spirit; no one has more beautifully expressed personal grief. A good example of Emerson's nature poetry is "The Snow-Storm," which in subject matter may be compared with Whittier's description of the storm in "Snow-Bound." "The Rhodora" is another beautiful little descriptive poem; in this Emerson shows a deftness in selection of fit words for poetical effect and a melodious combination of words rarely attained by the poets of America.

The "Concord Hymn," which contains the oft-quoted lines about the embattled farmers, represents Emerson's treatment of historical events.

"Threnody" is Emerson's expression of grief at the loss of his five-year-old son. The son, Waldo, was the oldest child of his parents and was a special favorite of the friends of the family, especially the philosopher and nature-lover, Thoreau. Waldo died of scarlatina after an illness of only three days. At the end of this poem, Emerson reaches a lofty height of resignation and belief in the

rightness of God's plan for the dearly loved little son. Though the poem may seem heavy at first reading, somewhat more careful perusal will enable the reader to see why many people of good judgment consider this poem one of the finest in American literature.

Some lovers of poetry consider that Emerson's poems are over-intellectual; they hold that Emerson's best work was his prose. It is quite true that more people read Emerson's prose than his poetry, but many critics now regard his poems as his best contributions to literature.

Certainly the selections given in this volume are sufficiently simple in idea or beautiful in expression to arouse almost any one's interest in Emerson as a representative and leading American poet.

THE SNOW-STORM

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
The sled and traveler stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.
Out of an unseen quarry evermore
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work
So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he
For number or proportion. Mockingly,
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and, at the gate,
A tapering turret overtops the work.

And when his hours are numbered, and the world
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,
The frolic architecture of the snow.

THE RHODORA

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that if eyes were made for seeing,
Then Beauty is its own excuse for being:
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose,
I never thought to ask, I never knew;
But, in my simple ignorance, suppose
The self-same Power that brought me here brought you.

CONCORD HYMN

Sung at the Completion of the Concord Monument, April 19, 1836

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And Time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone,
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

FORBEARANCE

Hast thou named all the birds without a gun?
Loved the wood-rose, and left it on its stalk?
At rich men's tables eaten bread and pulse?
Unarmed, faced danger with a heart of trust?
And loved so well a high behavior,
In man or maid, that thou from speech refrained,
Nobility more nobly to repay?
O, be my friend, and teach me to be thine!

THINE EYES STILL SHINED

Thine eyes still shined for me, though far
I lonely roved the land or sea:
As I behold yon evening star,
Which yet beholds not me.

This morn I climbed the misty hill,
And roamed the pastures through;
How danced thy form before my path
Amidst the deep-eyed dew!

When the redbird spread his sable wing,
And showed his side of flame;
When the rosebud ripened to the rose,
In both I read thy name.

THRENODY

THE South-wind brings
Life, sunshine, and desire,
And on every mount and meadow
Breathes aromatic fire;
But over the dead he has no power,
The lost, the lost, he cannot restore;
And, looking over the hills, I mourn
The darling who shall not return.

I see my empty house,
I see my trees repair their boughs;
And he, the wondrous child,
Whose silver warble wild
Outvalued every pulsing sound
Within the air's cerulean round, —
The hyacinthine boy, who did adorn
The world whereinto he was born,
And by his countenance repay
The favor of the loving Day, —
Has disappeared from the Day's eye;
Far and wide she cannot find him;
My hopes pursue, they cannot bind him.
Returned this day, the South-wind searches,
And finds young pines and budding birches;

But finds not the budding man;
Nature, who lost, cannot remake him;
Fate let him fall, Fate can't retake him;
Nature, Fate, men, him seek in vain.

And whither now, my truant wise and sweet,
O, whither tend thy feet?
I had the right, few days ago,
Thy steps to watch, thy place to know;
How have I forfeited the right?
Hast thou forgot me in a new delight?
I hearken for thy household cheer,
O eloquent child!
Whose voice, an equal messenger,
Conveyed thy meaning mild.
What though the pains and joys
Whereof it spoke were toys
Fitting his age and ken,
Yet fairest dames and bearded men,
Who heard the sweet request,
So gentle, wise, and grave,
Bended with joy to his behest,
And let the world's affairs go by,
Awhile to share his cordial game,
Or mend his wicker wagon-frame,

Still plotting how their hungry ear
That winsome voice again might hear;
For his lips could well pronounce
Words that were persuasions.

Gentlest guardians marked serene
His early hope, his liberal mien;
Took counsel from his guiding eyes
To make this wisdom earthly wise.
Ah, vainly do these eyes recall
The school-march, each day's festival,
When every morn my bosom glowed
To watch the convoy on the road,
The babe in willow wagon closed,
With rolling eyes and face composed;
With children forward and behind,
Like Cupids studiously inclined;
And he the chieftain paced beside,
The centre of the troop allied,
With sunny face of sweet repose,
To guard the babe from fancied foes.
The little captain innocent
Took the eye with him as he went;
Each village senior paused to scan
And speak the lovely caravan.
From the window I look out

To mark thy beautiful parade,
Stately marching in cap and coat,
To some tune by fairies played; —
A music heard by thee alone
To works as noble led thee on.

Now Love and Pride, alas! in vain,
Up and down their glances strain.
The painted sled stands where it stood;
The kennel by the corded wood;
His gathered sticks to stanch the wall
Of the snow-tower, when snow should fall;
The ominous hole he dug in the sand,
And childhood's castles built or planned;
His daily haunts I well discern, —
The poultry yard, the shed, the barn, —
And every inch of garden ground
Paced by the blessed feet around,
From the roadside to the brook
Whereinto he loved to look.
Step the meek fowls where erst they ranged;
The wintry garden lies unchanged;
The brook into the stream runs on;
But the deep-eyed boy is gone.

On that shaded day,
Dark with more clouds than tempests are,

When thou didst yield thy innocent breath
In birdlike heavings unto death,
Night came, and Nature had not thee;
I said, "We are mates in misery."
The morrow dawned with needless glow;
Each snowbird chirped, each fowl must crow;
Each tramper started; but the feet
Of the most beautiful and sweet
Of human youth had left the hill
And garden, — they were bound and still.
There's not a sparrow or a wren,
There's not a blade of autumn grain,
Which the four seasons do not tend
And tides of life and increase lend;
And every chick of every bird,
And weed and rock-moss is preferred.

O ostrich-like forgetfulness!
O loss of larger in the less!
Was there no star that could be sent,
No watcher in the firmament,
No angel from the countless host
That loiters round the crystal coast,
Could stoop to heal that only child,
Nature's sweet marvel undefiled,
And keep the blossom of the earth,

Which all her harvests were not worth?
Not mine, — I never called thee mine,
But Nature's heir, — if I repine,
And seeing rashly torn and moved
Not what I made, but what I loved,
Grow early old with grief that thou
Must to the wastes of Nature go, —
'Tis because a general hope
Was quenched, and all must doubt and grope.
For flattering planets seemed to say
This child should ills of ages stay,
By wondrous tongue, and guided pen,
Bring the flown Muses back to men.
Perchance not he but Nature ailed,
The world and not the infant failed.
It was not ripe yet to sustain
A genius of so fine a strain,
Who gazed upon the sun and moon
As if he came unto his own,
And, pregnant with his grander thought,
Brought the old order into doubt.
His beauty once their beauty tried;
They could not feed him, and he died,
And wandered backward as in scorn,
To wait an æon to be born,
Ill day which made this beauty waste,

Plight broken, this high face defaced!
Some went and came about the dead;
And some in books of solace read;
Some to their friends the tidings say;
Some went to write, some went to pray;
One tarried here, there hurried one;
But their heart abode with none.
Covetous death bereaved us all,
To aggrandize one funeral.
The eager fate which carried thee
Took the largest part of me:
For this losing is true dying;
This is lordly man's down-lying,
This his slow but sure reclining,
Star by star his world resigning.

O child of paradise,
Boy who made dear his father's home,
In whose deep eyes
Men read the welfare of the times to come,
I am too much bereft.
The world dishonored thou hast left.
O truth's and nature's costly lie!
O trusted broken prophecy!
O richest fortune sourly crossed!
Born for the future, to the future lost!

The deep Heart answered, "Weepest thou?
Worthier cause for passion wild
If I had not taken the child.
And deemest thou as those who pore,
With aged eyes, short way before, —
Think'st Beauty vanished from the coast
Of matter, and thy darling lost?
Taught he not thee — the man of eld
Whose eyes within his eyes beheld
Heaven's numerous hierarchy span
The mystic gulf from God to man?
To be alone wilt thou begin
When worlds of lovers hem thee in?
To-morrow, when the masks shall fall
That dizen Nature's carnival,
The pure shall see by their own will,
Which overflowing Love shall fill,
'Tis not within the force of fate
The fate-conjoined to separate.
But thou, my votary, weepest thou?
I gave thee sight — where is it now?
I taught thy heart beyond the reach
Of ritual, bible, or of speech;
Wrote in thy mind's transparent table,
As far as the incommunicable;
Taught thee each private sign to raise

Lit by the supersolar blaze.
Past utterance, and past belief,
And past the blasphemy of grief,
The mysteries of Nature's heart;
And though no Muse can these impart,
Throb thine with Nature's throbbing breast,
And all is clear from east to west.

"I came to thee as to a friend;
Dearest, to thee I did not send
Tutors, but a joyful eye,
Innocence that matched the sky,
Lovely locks, a form of wonder,
Laughter rich as woodland thunder,
That thou might'st entertain apart
The richest flowering of all art:
And, as the great all-loving Day
Through smallest chambers takes its way,
That thou might'st break thy daily bread
With prophet, savior, and head;
That thou might'st cherish for thine own
The riches of sweet Mary's son,
Boy-Rabbi, Israel's paragon.
And thoughtest thou such guest
Would in thy hall take up his rest?
Would rushing life forget her laws,

Fate's glowing revolution pause?
High omens ask diviner guess;
Not to be conned to tediousness.
And know my higher gifts unbind
The zone that girds the incarnate mind.
When the scanty shores are full
With Thought's perilous, whirling pool;
When frail Nature can no more,
Then the Spirit strikes the hour:
My servant, Death, with solving rite,
Pours finite into infinite.

"Wilt thou freeze love's tidal flow,
Whose streams through Nature circling go?
Nail the wild star to its track
On the half-climbed zodiac?
Light is light which radiates,
Blood is blood which circulates,
Life is life which generates,
And many-seeming life is one, —
Wilt thou transfix and make it none?
Its onward force too starkly pent
In figure, bone, and lineament?
Wilt thou, uncalled, interrogate,
Talker! the unreplying Fate?
Nor see the genius of the whole

Ascendant in the private soul,
Beckon it when to go and come,
Self-announced its hour of doom?
Fair the soul's recess and shrine,
Magic-built to last a season;
Masterpiece of love benign,
Fairer that expansive reason
Whose omen 'tis, and sign.
Wilt thou not ope thy heart to know
What rainbows teach, and sunsets show?
Verdict which accumulates
From lengthening scroll of human fates,
Voice of earth to earth returned,
Prayers of saints that inly burned, —
Saying, *What is excellent,*
As God lives, is permanent;
Hearts are dust, hearts' loves remain;
Heart's love will meet thee again.
Revere the Maker; fetch thine eye
Up to his style, and manners of the sky.
Not of adamant and gold
Built he heaven stark and cold;
No, but a nest of bending reeds,
Flowering grass and scented weeds;
Or like a traveler's fleeing tent,
Or bow above the tempest bent;

Built of tears and sacred flames,
And virtue reaching to its aims;
Built of furtherance and pursuing,
Not of spent deeds, but of doing.
Silent rushes the swift Lord
Through ruined systems still restored,
Broadsowing, bleak and void to bless,
Plants with worlds the wilderness;
Waters with tears of ancient sorrow
Apples of Eden ripe to-morrow.
House and tenant go to ground,
Lost in God, in Godhead found."

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

THERE have been several bright humorists among the poets of America, but never any one keener in the enjoyment of joking in verse than Oliver Wendell Holmes. In his humorous pieces he has a dry, quizzical air that is decidedly pleasing to young and old. His humor is not so remote as to be hidden from the youthful reader nor so obvious as to be distasteful to older people. Enjoying his verse-making as a diversion rather than engaging in it to make a living, Holmes shows in all his humorous pieces the frolicsome spirit of a youth out for a holiday. As an example of this phase of Holmes's poetry, the general favorite, "The Deacon's Masterpiece, or, The Wonderful 'One-hoss Shay'," should be read. Special attention, too, should be given to "The Boys," which was one of the "Poems of the Class of '29," Holmes's class in college. Each year when the class came together, Holmes wrote a poem for the reunion. Perhaps the best of all is "The Boys," which should surely be read to supplement the poems of this collection.

Holmes had a great and continually growing interest in poetry while he was performing his duties as professor of anatomy and physiology at Harvard College from 1847 to 1882. As early as 1852 he delivered a series of lectures on the poets of the nineteenth century. He read and appreciated poetry for many years while he was entertaining an ever growing circle by his own poetic productions. After the success of his essays entitled "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" in *The Atlantic Monthly*, about 1858, he became really a man of letters rather than a physician or a professor.

Some of Holmes's work ranks with the best serious

poetry in our language. Just after graduation from Harvard he wrote a lyric, "Old Ironsides," about the frigate *Constitution* which the navy department intended to destroy; the poem caused the navy department to rescind the order and save the ship. "The Chambered Nautilus" and "The Flower of Liberty" are little masterpieces. "The Last Leaf" is a remarkably felicitous combination of pathos and humor, so that it especially well illustrates both phases of Holmes's graceful art as a poet. During the last year of his life, when the publishers were bringing out a new edition of his works, Holmes wrote, regarding "The Last Leaf," as follows: "I am pleased to find that this poem, carrying with it the marks of having been written in the jocund morning of life, is still read and cared for. It was with a smile on my lips that I wrote it; I cannot read it without a sigh of tender remembrance. I hope it will not sadden my older readers, while it may amuse some of the younger ones to whom its experiences are as yet only floating fancies."

THE DEACON'S MASTERPIECE; OR, THE WONDERFUL "ONE-HOSS SHAY"

A Logical Story

Have you heard of the wonderful one-hoss shay,
That was built in such a logical way
It ran a hundred years to a day,
And then, of a sudden, it — ah, but stay,
I'll tell you what happened without delay,
Scaring the parson into fits,
Frightening people out of their wits, —
Have you ever heard of that, I say?

Seventeen hundred and fifty-five,
Georgius Secondus was then alive, —
Snuffy old drone from the German hive.
That was the year when Lisbon town
Saw the earth open and gulp her down,
And Braddock's army was done so brown,
Left without a scalp to its crown.
It was on the terrible Earthquake-day
That the Deacon finished the one-hoss shay.

Now, in building of chaises, I tell you what
There is always *somewhere* a weakest spot, —
In hub, tire, felloe, in spring or thill,
In panel, or crossbar, or floor, or sill,
In screw, bolt, thoroughbrace, — lurking still,
Find it somewhere you must and will, —
Above or below, or within or without, —
And that's the reason, beyond a doubt,
That a chaise *breaks down*, but doesn't *wear out.*

But the Deacon swore (as Deacons do,
With an "I dew vum," or an "I tell you,")
He would build one shay to beat the taown
'n' the keounty 'n' all the kentry raoun';
It should be so built that it couldn' break daown:
"Fur," said the Deacon, "'t's mighty plain
Thut the weakes' place mus' stan' the strain;
'n' the way t' fix it, uz I maintain, is only jest
T' make that place uz strong uz the rest."

So the Deacon inquired of the village folk
Where he could find the strongest oak,
That couldn't be split nor bent nor broke, —
That was for spokes and floor and sills;
He sent for lancewood to make the thills;
The crossbars were ash, from the straightest trees,

The panels of white-wood, that cuts like cheese,
But lasts like iron for things like these;
The hubs of logs from the "Settler's ellum," —
Last of its timber, — they couldn't sell 'em,
Never an axe had seen their chips,
And the wedges flew from between their lips,
Their blunt ends frizzled like celery-tips;
Step and prop-iron, bolt and screw,
Spring, tire, axle, and linchpin too,
Steel of the finest, bright and blue;
Thoroughbrace bison-skin, thick and wide;
Boot, top, dasher, from tough old hide
Found in the pit when the tanner died.
That was the way he "put her through." —
"There!" said the Deacon, "naow she'll dew!"

Do! I tell you, I rather guess
She was a wonder, and nothing less!
Colts grew horses, beards turned gray,
Deacon and deaconess dropped away,
Children and grandchildren — where were they?
But there stood the stout old one-hoss shay
As fresh as on Lisbon-earthquake day!

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED; — it came and found
The Deacon's masterpiece strong and sound.

Eighteen hundred increased by ten; —
"Hahnsum kerridge" they called it then.
Eighteen hundred and twenty came; —
Running as usual; much the same.
Thirty and forty at last arrive,
And then came fifty, and FIFTY-FIVE.

Little of all we value here
Wakes on the morn of its hundredth year
Without both feeling and looking queer.
In fact, there's nothing that keeps its youth,
So far as I know, but a tree and truth.
(This is a moral that runs at large;
Take it. — You're welcome. — No extra charge.)

FIRST OF NOVEMBER, — the Earthquake day —
There are traces of age in the one-hoss shay,
A general flavor of mild decay,
But nothing local, as one may say.
There couldn't be, — for the Deacon's art
Had made it so like in every part
That there wasn't a chance for one to start.
For the wheels were just as strong as the thills,
And the floor was just as strong as the sills,
And the panels just as strong as the floor,
And the whipple-tree neither less nor more,

And the back-crossbar as strong as the fore,
And spring and axle and hub *encore*.
And yet, *as a whole*, it is past a doubt
In another hour it will be *worn out!*

First of November, 'Fifty-five!
This morning the parson takes a drive.
Now, small boys, get out of the way!
Here comes the wonderful one-hoss shay,
Drawn by a rat-tailed, ewe-necked bay.
"Huddup!" said the parson. — Off went they.
The parson was working his Sunday's text, —
Had got to *fifthly*, and stopped perplexed
At what the — Moses — was coming next.
All at once the horse stood still,
Close by the meet'n'-house on the hill.
— First a shiver, and then a thrill,
Then something decidedly like a spill, —
And the parson was sitting upon a rock,
At half past nine by the meet'n'-house clock, —
Just the hour of the Earthquake shock!
— What do you think the parson found,
When he got up and stared around?
The poor old chaise in a heap or mound,
As if it had been to the mill and ground!

You see, of course, if you're not a dunce,
How it went to pieces all at once, —
All at once, and nothing first, —
Just as bubbles do when they burst.

End of the wonderful one-hoss shay.
Logic is logic. That's all I say.

OLD IRONSIDES

Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!
Long has it waved on high,
And many an eye has danced to see
That banner in the sky;
Beneath it rung the battle shout,
And burst the cannon's roar; —
The meteor of the ocean air
Shall sweep the clouds no more.

Her deck, once red with heroes' blood,
Where knelt the vanquished foe,
When winds were hurrying o'er the flood,
And waves were white below,

No more shall feel the victor's tread,
  Or know the conquered knee;
The harpies of the shore shall pluck
  The eagle of the sea!

O, better that her shattered hulk
  Should sink beneath the wave;
Her thunders shook the mighty deep,
  And there should be her grave;
Nail to the mast her holy flag,
  Set every threadbare sail,
And give her to the god of storms,
  The lightning and the gale!

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
  Sails the unshadowed main, —
  The venturous bark that flings
On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,
  And coral reefs lie bare,
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming
    hair.

Its web of living gauze no more unfurl;
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
And every chambered cell,
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,
Before thee lies revealed, —
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!

Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft step its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.

Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap, forlorn!
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born
Than ever Triton blew from wreathed horn!
While on mine ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings: —

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea.

THE FLOWER OF LIBERTY

WHAT flower is this that greets the morn,
Its hues from Heaven so freshly born?
With burning star and flaming band
It kindles all the sunset land:
O tell us what its name may be, —
Is this the Flower of Liberty?
It is the banner of the free,
The starry Flower of Liberty!

In savage Nature's far abode
Its tender seed our fathers sowed;
The storm-winds rocked its swelling bud,
Its opening leaves were streaked with blood,
Till lo! earth's tyrants shook to see
The full-blown Flower of Liberty!
Then hail the banner of the free,
The starry Flower of Liberty!

Behold its streaming rays unite,
One mingling flood of braided light, —
The red that fires the Southern rose,
With spotless white from Northern snows,
And, spangled o'er its azure, see
The sister Stars of Liberty!
Then hail the banner of the free,
The starry Flower of Liberty!

The blades of heroes fence it round,
Where'er it springs is holy ground;
From tower and dome its glories spread,
It waves where lonely sentries tread;
It makes the land as ocean free,
And plants an empire on the sea!
Then hail the banner of the free,
The starry Flower of Liberty!

Thy sacred leaves, fair Freedom's flower,
Shall ever float on dome and tower,
To all their heavenly colors true,
In blackening frost or crimson dew, —
And God love us as we love thee,
Thrice holy Flower of Liberty!
Then hail the banner of the free,
The starry FLOWER OF LIBERTY!

THE LAST LEAF

I saw him once before,
As he passed by the door,
And again
The pavement stones resound,
As he totters o'er the ground
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,
Ere the pruning-knife of Time
Cut him down,
Not a better man was found
By the Crier on his round
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,
And he looks at all he meets
Sad and wan,
And he shakes his feeble head,
That it seems as if he said,
"They are gone."

The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he has prest

In their bloom,
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said —
Poor old lady, she is dead
Long ago —
That he had a Roman nose,
And his cheek was like a rose
In the snow;

But now his nose is thin
And it rests upon his chin
Like a staff,
And a crook is in his back,
And a melancholy crack
In his laugh.

I know it is a sin
For me to sit and grin
At him here;
But the old three-cornered hat,
And the breeches, and all that,
Are so queer!

And if I should live to be
The last leaf upon the tree
In the spring,
Let them smile, as I do now,
At the old forsaken bough
Where I cling.

WALT WHITMAN

People of good judgment have various opinions about Walt Whitman's poetry. Some think that he was not a poet, but a prose writer who put his prose into a form like that of poetry by beginning a part of a sentence here and there with a capital letter and arranging the parts as if they were lines of poetry. These severe critics of Whitman's writings say that most of it lacks the fundamental requirement of poetry because the measure is roughly irregular or else not poetical measure in any respect; that it does not follow any rhythmical plan. They charge that Whitman's language lacks poetic tone, that he is limited in his range of ideas, that he is egotistical, that he is essentially common.

There are, on the other hand, numerous lovers of good literature who rank Whitman high as a poet. Some even consider him the greatest American poet. Such champions of Whitman assert that he voices, better than any other American poet, a certain great and noble-minded way of looking for the best in everything and hoping for the best. Such defenders of Whitman say that among American poets he is the fairest representative of true democracy or equality among men. They praise his frank utterance of commonplaces of observation in the language of the common folk. They admire him for his championship of the cause of the laboring man and for having had the courage to don overalls and work with his hands. They like his irregularities of verse formation. They point to his own words in *Leaves of Grass* as his best justification:

> "This is no book,
> Who touches this, touches a man."

To such admirers Whitman seems truly noble in his elemental simplicity and rugged in his disregard of conventional forms of poetry. Emerson wrote a letter to Whitman in which he called *Leaves of Grass* "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed."

Judgment in general now inclines to the views of the second group. Although deploring the deliberate roughnesses and crudities in which Whitman seems to glory, the majority of critics rank him high as a poet. Whitman may reasonably be said to get down to the roots of poetic feeling and to express in appropriate and significant language the vigorous, buffeting thoughts which surged through his democratic soul.

As representative of his achievements in poetry, I have selected examples of his more regular versification conforming tolerably well with the usual rhythmic structure of poetry and at the same time illustrating his distinctive poetic feeling. Probably Whitman's poem on Lincoln, "O Captain! My Captain!" is the best tribute ever written to that great leader.

In reading the characteristic poem, "When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloomed," the student will do well first to look through sections X, XX, and XXI, which give the underlying idea of the poem.

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rock, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up — for you the flag is flung — for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribboned wreaths — for you the shores acrowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here, Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY

A. L. Buried April 19, 1865

Hush'd be the camps to-day;
And soldiers, let us drape our war-worn weapons;
And each, with musing soul retire, to celebrate,
Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts;
Nor victory, nor defeat — No more time's dark events,
Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.

But sing, poet, in our name;
Sing of the love we bore him — because you, dweller in camps, know it truly.

Sing, to the lowered coffin there;
Sing, with the shovel'd clods that fill the grave — a verse,
For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOOR-YARD BLOOMED

I

When lilacs last in the door-yard bloomed,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd — and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

II

O powerful, western, fallen star!
O shades of night! O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd! O the black murk that hides the star!

O cruel hands that hold me powerless! O helpless soul of me!
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul!

III

In the door-yard fronting an old farm-house, near the white-washed palings,
Stands the lilac bush, tall-growing, with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom, rising, delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle . . . and from this bush in the door-yard,
With its delicate-color'd blossoms, and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
A sprig, with its flower, I break.

IV

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary, the thrush,
The hermit, withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
Sings by himself a song.
Song of the bleeding throat!

Death's outlet song of life — (for well, dear brother,
I know,
If thou wast not gifted to sing, thou would'st surely
die.)

V

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes, and through old woods (where lately the
violets peep'd from the ground, spotting the
gray débris);
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes —
passing the endless grass;
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in
the orchards;
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the
grave,
Night and day journeys a coffin.

VI

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night, with the great cloud darken-
ing the land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags, with the cities
draped in black,
With the show of the States themselves, as of crape-
veil'd women, standing,

With processions long and winding, and the flambeaus of the night,
With the countless torches lit — with the silent sea of faces, and the unbared heads,
With the wailing depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising strong and solemn;
With all the mournful voices of the dirges, pour'd around the coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs — Where amid these you journey,
With the tolling, tolling bells' perpetual clang;
Here! coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

VII

(Nor for you, for one, alone;
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring:
For fresh as the morning — thus would I chant a song for you, O sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,
O death! I cover you over with roses and early lilies;
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,

Copious, I break. I break the sprigs from the bushes:
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
For you and the coffins all of you, O death.)

VIII

O western orb, sailing the heaven!
Now I know what you must have meant, as a month since we walk'd,
As we walk'd up and down in the dark blue so mystic,
As we walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
As I saw you had something to tell, as you bent to me night after night,
As you droop'd from the sky low down, as if to my side, (while the other stars all look'd on;)
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I know not what, kept me from sleep;)
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west, ere you went, how full you were of woe;
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze, in the cool transparent night,

As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the
netherward black of the night,
As my soul, in its trouble, dissatisfied, sank, as where
you, sad orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

IX

Sing on, there in the swamp!
O singer bashful and tender! I hear your notes —
I hear your call;
I hear — I come presently — I understand you;
But a moment I linger — for the lustrous star has
detain'd me;
The star, my comrade, departing, holds and detains
me.

X

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there
I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet
soul that has gone!
And what shall my perfume be, for the grave of him
I love?

Sea-winds, blown from east and west,
Blown from the eastern sea, and blown from the
western sea, till there on the prairies meeting:

These, and with these, and the breath of my chant,
I perfume the grave of him I love.

XI

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,
To adorn the burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring, and farms, and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray-smoke lucid and bright,
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun, burning, expending the air;
With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green leaves of the trees prolific;
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a wind-dapple here and there;
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the sky, and shadows;
And the city at hand, with dwellings so dense, and stacks of chimneys,
And all the scenes of life, and the workshops, and the workmen homeward returning.

XII

Lo! body and soul! this land!
Mighty Manhattan, with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying tides, and the ships;
The varied and ample land — the South and the North in the light — Ohio's shores, and flashing Missouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies, cover'd with grass and corn.

Lo! the most excellent sun, so calm and haughty;
The violet and purple morn, with just-felt breezes:
The gentle, soft-born, measureless light;
The miracle, spreading, bathing all — the fulfill'd noon;
The coming eve, delicious — the welcome night, and the stars,
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

XIII

Sing on! sing on, you gray-brown bird!
Sing from the swamps, the recesses — pour your chant from the bushes;
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on, dearest brother — warble your reedy song;
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid, and free, and tender!
O wild and loose to my soul! O wondrous singer!
You only I hear — yet the star holds me, (but I will soon depart;)
Yet the lilac, with mastering odor, holds me.

XIV

Now while I sat in the day, and look'd forth,
In the close of the day, with its light, and the fields of spring, and the farmer preparing his crops,
In the large unconscious scenery of my land, with its lakes and forests,
In the heavenly aërial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds, and the storms;)
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the voices of children and women,
The many-moving sea-tides, — and I saw the ships how they sail'd
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all busy with labor,

And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on,
each with its meals and minutia of daily usages;
And the streets, how their throbbings throbb'd, and
the cities pent, — lo! then and there,
Falling among them all, and upon them all, — enveloping me with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail;
And I knew Death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.

XV

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me,
And I in the middle, as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night, that talks not,
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,
To the solemn shadowy cedars, and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me;
The gray-brown bird I know, receiv'd us comrades three;

And he sang what seem'd the song of death, and a verse for him I love.
From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars, and the ghostly pines so still,
Came the singing of the bird.

And the charm of the singing rapt me,
As I held, as if by their hands, my comrades in the night;
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

XVI

Come, lovely and soothing Death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each
Sooner or later, delicate Death.

Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious;
And for love, sweet love — But praise! O praise and praise,
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding Death.

Dark Mother, always gliding near, with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee — I glorify thee above all;
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.

Approach, encompassing Death — strong Deliveress!
When it is so — when thou hast taken them, I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving, floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O Death.

From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose, saluting thee — adornments and feastings for thee;
And the sights of the open landscape, and the high-spread sky, are fitting,
And the life and the fields and the huge and thoughtful night.

The night, in silence, under many a star;
The ocean shore, and the husky whispering wave, whose voice I know;
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-veil'd Death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song!
Over the rising and sinking waves — over the myriad fields, and the prairies wide;
Over the dense-pack'd cities all, and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O Death!

XVII

To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure, deliberate notes, spreading, filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist, and the swamp-perfume;
And I with my comrades there in the night.
While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.

XVIII

I saw the vision of armies;
And I saw, as in noiseless dreams, hundreds of battle-flags;
Borne through the smoke of the battles, and pierc'd with missiles, I saw them,

And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and
torn and bloody;
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and
all in silence,)
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men — I saw
them;
I saw the débris and débris of all dead soldiers;
But I saw they were not as was thought;
They themselves were fully at rest — they suffer'd
not;
The living remain'd and suffer'd — the mother
suffer'd,
And the wife and the child, and the musing comrade
suffer'd,
And the armies that remained suffer'd.

XIX

Passing the visions, passing the night;
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands;
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying
song of my soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, (yet varying,
ever-altering song,

As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and
falling, flooding the night,
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning,
and yet again bursting with joy,)
Covering the earth, and filling the spread of the
heaven,
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from
recesses.

XX

Must I leave thee, lilac with heart-shaped leaves?
Must I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming,
returning with spring?

Must I pass from my song for thee;
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west,
communing with thee,
O comrade lustrous, with silver face in the night?

XXI

Yet each I keep, and all;
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown
bird, I keep,
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,
I keep,
With the lustrous and drooping star, with the
countenance full of woe;

With the lilac tall, and its blossoms of mastering odor;
Comrades mine, and I in the midst, and their memory ever I keep — for the dead I loved so well;
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands — and this for his dear sake;
Lilac and star and bird, twined with the chant of my soul,
With the holders holding my hand, nearing the call of the bird,
There in the fragrant pines, and the cedars dusk and dim.

LIST OF POEMS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY READING

POE

Lenore
The Bells
Annabel Lee
A Valentine
To My Mother
Eulalie
Tamerlane

LONGFELLOW

A Psalm of Life
The Reaper and the Flowers
The Wreck of the Hesperus
The Village Blacksmith
The Rainy Day
Excelsior
The Slave's Dream
The Arrow and the Song
Evangeline
The Building of the Ship
The Song of Hiawatha
Paul Revere's Ride
King Robert of Sicily
Sonnet on Chaucer
The Children's Hour

WHITTIER

The Angels of Buena Vista
Maud Muller
Skipper Ireson's Ride
The Frost Spirit
The Mayflowers
To My Old Schoolmaster
Our Autocrat (Holmes)
The Poet and the Children (Longfellow)
A Welcome to Lowell
Centennial Hymn
The Wreck of Rivermouth
Toussaint L'Ouverture
The Slave-Ships
The Panorama
Barbara Frietchie
The Peace Convention at Brussels
In School-Days

BRYANT

The Yellow Violet
The Cost of a Pleasure
The West Wind
A Walk at Sunset
March, June, November
Monument Mountain
Hymn to the North Star
Song of Marion's Men
The Fifth Book of Homer's Odyssey (translated)
The Winds
Our Country's Call
Stella
Robert of Lincoln

EMERSON

To Rhea
Alphonso of Castile
The Humble-Bee
Compensation
Holidays
May-Day
Freedom
Boston Hymn
Nature
The Romany Girl
Song of Nature
Two Rivers
April
Friendship

HOLMES

Dorothy Q., A Family Portrait
The Cambridge Churchyard
The Comet
Lexington
The Morning Visit
The Ploughman
Spring
The Bells
Contentment
The Old Player
Grandmother's Story of Bunker Hill Battle
Parson Turell's Legacy, or, The President's Old Arm-Chair
The Broomstick Train
Hymn of Trust
God Save the Flag!
Under the Washington Elm, Cambridge
No Time Like the Old Time
The Boys

WHITMAN

Election Day, November, 1884
Washington's Monument February, 1885
A Prairie Sunset
Now Precedent Songs, Farewell
How Solemn as One by One (A short description of soldiers returning from the war.)
Crossing Brooklyn Ferry (A poem packed with specific observations of common things.)
Poems of Joy
Mannahatta
Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun

PAINES

Snowbound: 65 pp. 129-132
10 pp. 136
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10 pp. 146-147
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